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# A Description and Evaluation of the Public Speaking of the Anti - Corn Law League: 1838-1846.

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A DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PUBLIC  
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A Description and Evaluation of the Public Speaking  
of the Anti-Corn Law League:  
1838-1846

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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in

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by

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## ABSTRACT

On September 24, 1838, seven men met at the York Hotel, Manchester, to form an association devoted to total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. On March 20, 1839, several local repeal associations formed themselves into an Anti-Corn Law League to agitate for Corn Law repeal through means of lecturers, securing the support of the public press, and a stamped circular. The agitation against the Corn Laws was focused into four distinct periods. From October, 1838, to December, 1839, the League relied on lecturers as the primary propaganda device. From January, 1840, to August, 1840, the lecture campaign was supplemented with the publication of tracts and the Anti-Corn Law Circular. There was no carefully organized propaganda campaign from September, 1840, to August, 1842. Finally from September, 1842, to July, 1846, the League concentrated on the reform of the register and on the purchase of qualifications.

During the entire campaign, the League used seven forms of oral agitation: lectures, debates and discussions, weekly meetings, deputation visits to county or borough meetings, election speaking, conferences, and special meetings. The most active lecturers were A. W.

Paulton, a medical student from Bolton; Sidney Smith, a solicitor from Edinburgh; James Acland, a former radical agitator; John Joseph Finnigan, a Manchester working man; and John Murray, a Liverpool moral-force Chartist. From 1838 to 1840, the oral agitation was the most important propaganda technique used; after 1840 the registration and qualification campaign received major emphasis.

From the League papers available, it is clear that Richard Cobden and George Wilson not Cobden and John Bright were the primary League leaders; that Richard Cobden, John Bright, Robert Ross Rowan Moore, William Johnson Fox, Colonel Thomas Perronet Thompson, and Charles Pelham Villiers were the leading League speakers; and that the Bright-then-Cobden speaking order was not consistent.

The methods of personal persuasion used by the League speakers varied. Richard Cobden relied on the intrinsic value of his arguments, combining his depth of knowledge with a sincere, honest delivery. John Bright used sarcasm and ridicule in severe attacks on League enemies. Moore used attacks on evidence and logical adequacy. Colonel Thompson relied on the use of his personal experiences as evidence. Fox combined moral fervor and sincerity. Villiers used his experiences in the Commons as evidence.

The reputation of the League as a persevering national agitation combined with the unknown gains of the

qualification campaign and the implications of a mammoth agitation from the £250,000 fund frightened the ruling class in 1845. By frightening the ruling class, the League was able to prevent Sir Robert Peel from opening the ports, to force the Whigs out of their fixed duty scheme, and to bring about the repeal of the Corn Laws before Peel anticipated it would be necessary. The reputation of the League was built primarily by their large public meetings and the carefully organized qualification campaign, thus the oral agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League was an effective constituent of the total propaganda campaign.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On September 10, 1838, a group of Manchester radicals met at the York Hotel to hear a report from Dr. John Bowring, an ardent free trader, who had just returned from a commercial mission to Egypt. Before the evening concluded the radicals decided to form a Manchester association dedicated to the repeal of the Corn Laws. A founding meeting was held on September 24, 1838, with seven men present. By early October the new association had established a provisional committee which included the names of such distinguished free traders as Richard Cobden, a prominent Manchester radical; John Bright, a Rochdale manufacturer; Archibald Prentice, a radical newspaper editor; George Wilson, later president of the League; Thomas Potter, a rich Manchester merchant and later mayor of Manchester; and John Benjamin Smith, the leader of the Manchester anti-Corn Law sympathizers. Under the leadership of these men the Manchester association grew rapidly until the conference of anti-Corn Law delegates held in London in 1839. After the House of Commons rejected Charles Pelham Villiers' motion to repeal the Corn Laws the conference decided to set up a permanent Anti-Corn Law League. On

March 20, 1839, the delegates resolved unanimously upon:

the formation of a permanent union, to be called the Anti-Corn Law League, composed of all the towns and districts represented in the delegation, and as many others as might be induced to form Anti-Corn Law Associations and to join the League.

With the view to secure the unity of action, the central office of the League shall be established in Manchester, to which body shall be entrusted, among other duties, that of engaging and recommending competent lecturers, the obtaining of the cooperation of the public press, and the establishing and conducting of a stamped circular, for the purpose of keeping a constant correspondence with the local associations.<sup>1</sup>

The Anti-Corn Law League organized one of the most successful political agitations of its time. Those who established the League saw a rallying point for radical energies and, more importantly, a chance of success against conservatism. The most recent of the League historians, Norman McCord, has emphasized that no matter how much the League leaders "might stress the limited aims of their agitation, the Leaguers were perfectly aware that they were striking at the political and social control of the aristocracy."<sup>2</sup> The League undermined the control of the landed aristocracy through the use of a highly organized program of political agitation. McCord concluded that the League was "the most advanced political machine this country had yet seen; this machine was at once a

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<sup>1</sup>Archibald Prentice, History of the Anti-Corn-Law League (London: W & F. G. Cash, 1853), I, 124.

<sup>2</sup>Norman McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League: 1838-1846 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), p. 23.

wonder to contemporaries and one of the League's most important bequests to the future."<sup>1</sup> After 1846 many of the Leaguers remained active in political life and carried into their later employments the techniques they learned during the agitation against the Corn Laws. For example, George Wilson, the chairman of the League Council, spent another twenty-five years in political life including service with the National Reform League in the 1860s; James Acland, a League lecturer, turned up in 1867 as an election and registration adviser to the Reform League. Both the success of the League's campaign and the far reaching effects of the agitation on the political life of Great Britain suggest the importance of an analysis of the League's methods. This study will reconstruct the oral agitation campaign of the Anti-Corn Law League and analyze the factors of personal persuasion used by the League speakers.

The problem is to determine the flow of discussion generated by the Anti-Corn Law League during its campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws from 1838 to 1846. An analysis of the factors of personal persuasion used by League speakers and an analysis of the contribution of the oral agitation campaign to the total repeal of the Corn Laws will be made. Although the formation of the national association did not come officially until March 20, 1839,

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 163.



it was the formation of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association on September 24, 1838, which marked the beginning of a continuous, effective campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Also the Manchester men retained control of the League apparatus throughout its existence, in spite of an attempted take-over by the London association and the removal of the official League headquarters to London in 1843. The limitation of this study to the League will necessarily eliminate consideration of various regional associations which for limited periods of time carried on successful anti-Corn Law agitations which were often only an extension of a policy or procedure originated by the national association. The Leeds Anti-Monopoly Association and lecturers Flint and Greig, the Scottish Anti-Corn Law Association and lecturers Hargreaves and Dawson, the Manchester Operative Association, the Liverpool Anti-Monopoly Association, and others will be discussed only when their lecturers were hired by the League, or when their activities overlapped with those of the League. The speakers studied include both the paid lecturers and the members of the League Council, who because of their profession or wealth, were able to carry out gratuitously the work of the League agitation. Specifically this study proposes to discover the flow of oral discussion within the total League campaign, to evaluate the personal persuasion of the League speaking, and to determine the significance

of public speaking to the repeal of the Corn Laws.

The procedure of investigation will include, first, the description of the formation of the Manchester Association, its members, its goals, and its methods; then, the scope of the oral agitation campaign for each year from 1838 until the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 will be reconstructed. Second, the factors of personal persuasion used by the League speakers will be isolated. Finally the relationship of personal persuasion to the success of total League campaign, and the relationship of public speaking to the successful repeal of the Corn Laws will be sought.

There are no previous studies of the speaking of the Anti-Corn Law League as a movement, but there are four histories of the League which outline the flow of the League's propaganda campaign. In 1845 Monsieur Frederic Bastiat<sup>1</sup> translated into French the speeches of the League's leading orators delivered from March, 1843, to January, 1845, and commented on the League's work with a view to popularizing the principles of free trade in France. In 1854 Archibald Prentice, a member of the League Council and editor of the Manchester Times, wrote the most comprehensive contemporary account of the League. Although Prentice revealed many biases, particularly in

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<sup>1</sup>Frederic Bastiat, Cobden et la Ligue, ou l'Agitation Anglaise pour la Liberte du Commerce (Paris: Guillaumin, Rue Richelieu, 1845).

his appreciation of speakers, his account is valuable for the amount of detail he preserved about the meetings and lecturers of the League. Henry Ashworth<sup>1</sup> of Bolton, another member of the League Council, waited until a period of illness in 1876 to write for his children a highly personalized recollection of the League. Norman McCord published in 1957 the most comprehensive and objective history of the League, researched in the League Letter Book and in the various papers of J. B. Smith, Wilson, Bright, and Cobden. With access to more material than any earlier League writers McCord attempted to "supplement or correct earlier writers," and to "trace the origin, development, and activities of the League as a political pressure group."<sup>2</sup>

Some of the Corn Law debates in Parliament from 1838 until 1846 have been analyzed. Thomas Fernandez<sup>3</sup> examined the speeches of Sir Robert Peel on the Corn Laws. Alfred Funk,<sup>4</sup> analyzing the line of argument in the Corn

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Ashworth, Recollections of Richard Cobden and the Anti Corn-Law League (London: Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1876).

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas L. Fernandez, "The Speeches of Sir Robert Peel on the Repeal of the Corn Laws" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Speech, University of Missouri, 1960).

<sup>4</sup>Alfred A. Funk, "An Analysis of the Corn Law Debates in the British House of Commons, 1838, 1839, and 1840" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Speech, University of Washington, 1965).

Law debates in the House in 1838, 1839, and 1840, concluded that although those opposed to the Corn Laws did the better debating chiefly because of the superior quality of their evidence, they failed to carry the vote in the House.

Many studies of the most popular of the League speakers have been completed; John Bright has received the most attention in speech dissertations and journal articles. Fisher<sup>1</sup> and Strother<sup>2</sup> concurred that Bright gained a prestigious position as a leading spokesman for the Anti-Corn Law League. Baylen,<sup>3</sup> analyzing Bright as a speaker and student of speaking, concluded that "Bright prided himself on the fact that he never made a speech for a purpose he did not believe sound or true;"<sup>4</sup> that Bright was a "stronger" speaker than Cobden; that Bright's early speeches were memorized but:

by the beginning of the Anti-Corn Law League in the eighteen-forties, he had already developed the practice of writing out only the heads of his argument,

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<sup>1</sup>Walter R. Fisher, "John Bright: Hawker of Holy Things," Quarterly Journal of Speech, LI (April, 1965), 157-163.

<sup>2</sup>David B. Strother, "John Bright: The Devil's Advocate," Southern Speech Journal, XXIV (Summer, 1959), 201-209.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph O. Baylen, "John Bright as Speaker and Student of Speaking," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLI (April, 1955), 159-168.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

interspersed with an occasional 'key sentence', and ending up with the peroration transcribed in full;  
 . . .<sup>1</sup>

and that the outstanding elements of Bright's speaking were simplicity of manner, colorful and happy illustration, forcefulness, and poise.<sup>2</sup> Feris<sup>3</sup> asserted that Bright first came into the League because of his ability to "translate the theories of the League into language so simple and graphic as to be understood by the weariest labourer;"<sup>4</sup> that the texts we have of Bright's speeches originated as reporters' shorthand notes; and that because of the frequency with which Bright spoke, especially during the anti-Corn Law agitation, he used the same ideas but reworded the argument at each appearance.<sup>5</sup> Ausubel,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Baylen, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Baylen quotes extensively from and synthesizes the following sources which therefore will not be reviewed separately as previous research: William Robertson, Life and Times of the Right Hon. John Bright (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1912); George Macaulay Trevelyan, The Life of John Bright (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913); Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910).

<sup>3</sup>Francis Feris, "The Speech Preparation of John Bright," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XVII (November, 1931), 492-504.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 493.

<sup>5</sup>The following sources are summarized in the Feris article and therefore will not be reviewed separately as previous research: "Bright as an Orator," Nation (June 13, 1867), 478; R. B. O'Brien, John Bright: A Monograph (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911).

<sup>6</sup>Herman Ausubel, John Bright Victorian Reformer (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966).

in the only study of Bright researched primarily in the Bright papers scattered through some twenty-seven libraries on two continents, concluded that although the League "had in its ranks a number of first-rate speakers, none of them could capture and hold an audience as Bright could;"<sup>1</sup> and that as an "orator of orators," Bright was:

poised; commanding in appearance; brimming over with earnestness, enthusiasm, and passion; quick witted; brief; clear; incredibly articulate and eminently hearable.<sup>2</sup>

Bright emerged from the previous research as a sincere, enthusiastic speaker who excelled at colorful graphic description and became the leading spokesman for the Anti-Corn Law League, occupying a position as a speaker even superior to Cobden.

In the only dissertation on Richard Cobden's Corn Law speaking, Richard Young<sup>3</sup> relied extensively on Morley's biography<sup>4</sup> of Cobden. Morley sought for the character of Cobden the agitator as well as Cobden the speaker. After asking many of the conservatives and liberals who heard Cobden, Morley selected "persuasiveness" as the chief characteristic of Cobden's speaking--a

<sup>1</sup>Ausubel, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Forsythe Young, "A Rhetorical Study of Some of Richard Cobden's Speeches" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of Speech, Cornell University, 1933).

<sup>4</sup>John Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1881).

persuasiveness characterized by "simplicity, earnestness, and conviction with a singular faculty of exposition."<sup>1</sup>

It was in the area of knowledge and logic that Cobden excelled, but he was not incapable of passion or vehement expression. In spite of Cobden's facility with argument, Morley added:

It was the whole expression of Cobden's personality which distinguished his speaking . . . those who listened . . . were delighted by mingled vivacity and ease, by directness, by spontaneousness and reality, by the charm, so effective and so uncommon between a speaker and his audience, of personal friendliness and undisguised cordiality.<sup>2</sup>

Cobden also benefited, in the eyes of his audiences, from his membership in the Church of England, his transparent honesty, and a "kindly imaginativeness." Morley concluded that Cobden was the best known of the League speakers although the agitation would not have been successful without the "labours of many other men, who devoted themselves with hardly inferior energy to the exhausting work of organization and propaganda."<sup>3</sup>

One of those others who were associated with that exhausting work of League propaganda was William Johnson Fox. In his study of Fox, Miller<sup>4</sup> sought both the

<sup>1</sup>Morley, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>4</sup>Arthur B. Miller, "Fox was Rhetoric: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Anti-Corn-Law Speeches of William Johnson Fox" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of Speech, University of Oregon, 1962).

characteristics of Fox's speaking and the place which Fox should occupy in the hierarchy of League speakers. Because of his experience as a Unitarian minister, as editor of the Repository and The True Sun, as author of two volumes of sermons entitled Christ and Christianity, as literary and dramatic critic for the Morning Chronicle, Fox entered the League agitation as "a mature and experienced orator, writer, editor, and critic."<sup>1</sup> Fox's League speaking was primarily refutatory.<sup>2</sup> Most often it was the landlords who were the "they" of Fox's attack, as "he joined the ethos of God with that of country and destiny against the influences of the enemy."<sup>3</sup> In support of his conclusion that Fox had uncommon ability to excite audiences to action, Miller quoted Prentice--Fox abounded "with neatly pointed epigram, cutting sarcasm, withering denunciation, and argument condensed and urged with laconic force"--Holyoake--"Mr. W. J. Fox . . . surpassed all the orators of the League of that day in the brilliance of speech"--Packe--"Fox had a soft melodious voice irresistible compelling"--Mongredien--"Not argumentative and persuasive like Cobden, nor natural and forcible as Mr. Bright, his [Fox's] forte lay rather in appealing to the emotions of his audience and in this branch of the

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 33.



oratorical art his power was irresistible."<sup>1</sup>

One final category of conclusions on previous research of League speaking is the place or prominence of Bright and Cobden as the League orators. Ausubel suggested that as the League agitation ended in 1846, Cobden and Bright reaped the public credit for the League's success although both repeatedly gave credit to other League leaders.<sup>2</sup> It may have been the subsequent careers of both Bright and Cobden in the House which helped this conclusion to the point that in such recent histories as Sir Llewellyn Woodward's The Age of Reform: 1815-1870 of The Oxford History of England<sup>3</sup> no other names are mentioned as League administrators or spokesmen. Obviously biographers of both Bright and Cobden have strengthened the Bright-Cobden supremacy. In 1881 Morley, while admitting he is omitting the names and labors of many other able men, maintained that the picture of the two men leaving home, family, and business to carry forth a cause for the good of the people caught the imagination of publicists and historians. Morley found Bright's strength in passion and Cobden's in persuasion so that "the alliance between them far more than doubled the power

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, pp. 64, 73.

<sup>2</sup>Ausubel, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1962.

that either could have exerted without the other."<sup>1</sup>

Trevelyan added William Johnson Fox to the list. Comparing Fox to Bright to Cobden, Trevelyan concluded:

As an orator Fox was singularly like Bright in the rush of his eloquence in his constant appeal to the moral passions of the audience, his homely wit, and his power of incisive illustration. The difference was that Fox had more power of ornate and artificial exuberance of diction while Bright played more directly on the simple passions. The League had the fortune to possess in its three chief speakers the three requirements of effective oratory. Cobden was argument, Bright was passion, Fox was rhetoric.<sup>2</sup>

Although Trevelyan admitted that Fox's speeches read better than Bright's, he maintained that the public who heard both thought Bright the greater orator. As previously cited, Baylen concurred, quoting from Lord John Russell that Bright was a "stronger" speaker than Cobden.<sup>3</sup>

In relation to the previous research, this study does not attempt to duplicate the full scale studies of the oratory of Bright, Cobden, or Fox; rather the emphasis is on the part each of these men played in the total anti-Corn Law agitation. An attempt is also made to discover if Bright, Cobden, and Fox have been accurately given credit for the most effective League speaking.

The field of research for this study included unpublished papers, newspapers, and numerous books

<sup>1</sup>Morley, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup>Trevelyan, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup>Baylen, p. 161.

scattered through the Manchester Central Reference Library, the British Museum Newspaper Library, and the libraries of Louisiana State University and the University of California. Three of the most important sources of unpublished papers on the League are kept at the Manchester Central Reference Library. The Wilson Papers include some 4,000 to 5,000 documents which cover the active period of the life of the president of the League--1830-1870. Besides throwing light on the internal development of the Liberal Party, the development of railroads and other commercial interests in Manchester, these papers provide insights into the inner policy workings of the Anti-Corn Law League, and they establish a relationship between Cobden and Wilson which historians earlier than 1957 had not found. There are some three hundred fifty letters from Cobden and some five hundred from Bright in these papers. The only surviving Letter Book of the League is also at Manchester. Some eight hundred letters sent by agents, supporters, and lecturers of the League during 1838, 1839, and 1840 provide detailed information on the methods, costs, and results of the agitation which are not available for the later years. The J. B. Smith Corn Law Papers are also at Manchester. Smith started an anti-Corn Law agitation on his own in the 1820s and was instrumental in forming the Manchester association in 1838. The Smith papers contain many letters connected

with the lecture agitation in the early months of 1839.

The three most important newspaper sources for the anti-Corn Law agitation are the League's own papers: The Anti-Corn Law Circular published in Manchester from April 16, 1839, until April 8, 1841, when it became the Anti-Bread Tax Circular from April 21, 1841, until September 26, 1843, and finally the League published in London from September 30, 1843, until July 4, 1846. These papers include regular reports from the lecturers and full or lengthy texts of the speeches given at the large League meetings in Manchester and London. Both the Manchester Guardian and the available Manchester Times were consulted. The Guardian was a free trade paper but was in no way tied to the League and was not above correcting the Leaguers if the Guardian felt the League needed it. The Manchester Times was published by Archibald Prentice, a member of the League Council and one of the lecturers of the League. Correspondence between the free traders in 1838 and 1839 often referred to Prentice's articles on the agitation. The following newspapers at the British Museum Newspaper Library were useful in comparing speech texts and in ascertaining the results of the League agitation: The Times was anti-League even though in 1842 it recognized the League as a "great fact"; the Morning Chronicle, a radical London paper, early reported the beginnings of the Metropolitan Anti-Corn Law Association; the Sun and the

Penny Satirist received money from the League to include favorable reports of League meetings; Lloyd's Illustrated London Newspaper, Bell's New Weekly Messenger, and News of the World also present analyses of some of the successes of the League and some of the characteristics of its speakers.

Contemporary periodicals were searched. The Illustrated London News, Blackwood's Magazine, the Eclectic Review, the Westminster Review contain a few articles on the anti-Corn Law agitation. The Quarterly Review for December, 1842, contains a seventy page article which summarizes much of the anti-League feeling of the press and tries to affix blame on the League for the 1842 turnouts. Books were searched for background information on the Corn Laws, the anti-Corn Law agitations, and comments and references about the individual League speakers.

There are a few terms which must be understood in their nineteenth century environment. When a lecture was given, a chairman was elected; he briefly introduced the lecturer who immediately arose and hopefully gave his speech without interruption. If he allowed discussion, the lecturer either submitted to questions or allowed the opposition a short speech which he answered. A Discussion followed a formally structured procedure with rigid time limits and set propositions for each day or session of the discussion. The term "debate" was used interchangeably

with "discussion" by some lecturers in connection with outdoor agitation, but was more often reserved to describe a kind of speaking in the House of Commons. Audiences were composed of tenants-at-will; of farm laborers; of operatives or mechanics who were artisans, factory workers, or some type of working or laboring man; or of electors, who were either occupiers of buildings of £10 annual value, or were the holders of forty shilling freeholds, or were tenants-at-will.

The speech texts used for analysis were those printed in the League's own papers. Several anthologies of the speeches of Bright, Cobden, Fox, and other League speakers exist as do pamphlet reports of the more important of the League speeches. Numerous references in the Wilson and Smith papers to efforts to correct speeches for pamphlet printing suggest that the pamphlet and later anthology texts are not as close to what the speaker said as the texts printed in the newspapers. The Circulars were at first printed fortnightly, but starting in 1843 the League was printed weekly and often the Wednesday night Covent Garden speeches were printed in the Saturday paper. Thus it seems that the least amount of time was available for changes in those speeches printed in the League papers. A comparison of the speech texts of meetings held during January and February, 1845, in the Sun, The Times, the Manchester Guardian, the Manchester Times,

and the League reveal few significant differences from the totally partisan League to the anti-League The Times. Even though Prentice noted that by 1838 the Manchester papers were employing excellent shorthand reporters, the texts available are in no way exact records of what the speakers said. Many speech texts were written in the form of the third person reporter telling what the speaker said; other texts toward the end of the League agitation appear to be near representations of what was said. Previous research has established that neither Bright nor Cobden wrote out their speeches before delivery so it seems probable that reporters alone are responsible for their speech texts. There is some evidence that other of the League speakers wrote out their speeches, particularly W. J. Fox, and copies of these speeches may have been given to the editor. Nevertheless, the 1845 spot check revealed that the reports of the speeches in the League papers adhere to the general topics discussed in about the same style as did the available non-League sources. Most revealing for this study of personal persuasion are the short excerpts of speeches of the lecturers including both comment and criticism written by non-League writers which were copied into the League papers. These excerpts detail only what the correspondent felt was the most telling argument or most effective part of the speech and leave a valuable record of the League agitation which this study

will attempt to reconstruct.

Endless arguments might resolve around the constituents of personal persuasion. This study used the term in an attempt to broaden the scope of inquiry to include as many factors as possible which reflect the persuasion of the speaker as opposed to the persuasion of his arguments. Both the Aristotelian concepts of character, sagacity, and good will plus the Ciceronian concept of prior impression will be included. Also the criteria suggested by Rosenthal<sup>1</sup>--the organization of the ideas and the degree to which they are developed, the nature and extent of the supporting materials, the matter the speaker chooses to discuss and the matter he chooses to avoid, the precision or lack of it with which he orders his thoughts --will be applied. Personal persuasion will include those factors of invention, arrangement, delivery, and audience reaction which portray the entire man speaking.

This study attempts to recreate the oral political agitation campaign of the Anti-Corn Law League between 1838 and 1846. The founding of the League, the activities of its paid lecturers and council speakers during each year of the agitation are detailed. Then an analysis of the factors of personal persuasion which helped determine

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<sup>1</sup>Paul I. Rosenthal, "The Concept of Ethos and the Structure of Persuasion," Speech Monographs, XXXIII (June, 1966), 114-126.



the League's success is made and the place of the entire oral campaign in the total agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws is sought.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORAL AGITATION CAMPAIGN OF THE ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE

#### The First Lecture Campaign: October, 1838 - December, 1839

Late in July, 1838, a Dr. Birnie of Bolton announced a lecture on the Corn Laws for the Bolton Theatre. A large crowd gathered. The lecturer was well received, but:

he had provided himself with a great bundle of papers, and he could not easily find those to which he wished to refer. When he did find them he read them badly, his connecting observations were not understandable, and the meeting expressing its impatience, he came to a complete stand still.<sup>1</sup>

As Prentice tells the story, a young medical student, Mr. Abraham Walter Paulton, was sitting in one of the side boxes with Mr. Thomas Thomasson who said to him, "Do Paulton get on the stage and say something, and don't let such a meeting be lost." Paulton rushed around to the stage and asked the meeting to hear him for a few minutes. He spoke for fifteen to twenty minutes and created such a favorable impression that it was arranged that he should deliver a lecture there on August 6. On Monday, August 6,

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 64.

Paulton combined argument with appeals to high moral principle to delight a crowded theatre audience. The story of Paulton's rescue of Birnie is important to the foundation of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association only in the publicity it gave to Paulton's speaking ability and to his knowledge of the Corn Laws; because of this publicity Paulton was chosen as the first lecturer for a new Anti-Corn Law Association.

Early in September, 1838, Dr. John Bowring, a financial and commercial investigator for the British government and an ardent free trader, was returning from a trade mission to Egypt and Turkey when he was invited to stop off at Manchester to speak to a group of radical free traders. On September 10, 1839, about sixty Manchester radicals met at the invitation of Archibald Prentice at the York Hotel. Bowring spoke of the desolation he had seen as a result of the war between Egypt and Turkey and the amount of human misery created by restrictions on the importation of corn. Before the meeting concluded the radicals decided to form a Manchester association to agitate for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

The first meeting of the new association was held at the York Hotel on Monday, September 24, 1838. Seven men were in attendance--Edward Baxter, W. A. Cunningham, Andrew Dalziel, James Howie, James Leslie, Archibald Prentice, and Philip Thomson. The name Anti-Corn Law

Association was chosen to insure a single purpose. Since the failure of former associations for repeal was attributed to the lack of popular support, subscriptions were to be only five shillings. At a second meeting held on October 1 with Baxter absent and William Rawson present, it was announced that subscriptions had been obtained from fifty people. On October 13 an advertisement appeared in the Manchester Times listing a provisional committee of thirty-eight men, which included John Bright, later League speaker; Archibald Prentice; William Rawson, later League treasurer; George Wilson, later chairman of the League Council; and John Benjamin Smith, Treasurer. A week later several additional names were added to the Provisional Committee including that of Richard Cobden who had just returned from a trip abroad.

The first act of the new association was to invite A. W. Paulton of Bolton to lecture in Manchester. The manor court room of the Corn Exchange was engaged and the admittance fixed at 2d. J. B. Smith suggested that some of the committee wanted to hear Paulton before recommending him to undertake an anti-Corn Law lecturing tour and that Paulton be warned to avoid all allusions to party politics in order that all parties might be united behind the Corn Laws without compromise of political opinion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter J. B. Smith to Chairman of the Anti-Corn Law Association, October 17, 1838.

At 7 P.M. on October 25 Paulton gave his first Manchester lecture to a large audience; he spoke for two hours and retired amidst loud and long cheering.<sup>1</sup> On November 1 Paulton gave his second and concluding lecture in Manchester, after which J. B. Smith announced that several towns had asked Paulton to lecture on the Corn Laws and that a committee was trying to make arrangements.

The first lecture tour by the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association was conducted by J. B. Smith and Paulton in the industrial areas near Manchester, with the expenses of £50 paid by Smith and Cobden.<sup>2</sup> Paulton gave his first lecture on November 26, 1838, to some 4,000 to 5,000 people in the town hall, Birmingham. On the following day Paulton gave a lecture to an enthusiastic and crowded audience in Wolverhampton. On the 28th they returned to Birmingham where Paulton gave a second lecture and, although this lecture was much applauded, Smith reported that the Chartists amended the free trade motion to support the Charter. The large crowds at Birmingham were undoubtedly due to the support of Joseph Sturge who in allegiance was, first, a leader of the Birmingham Chartists and, second, a Corn Law repealer. Smith and Paulton returned to Wolverhampton for a second lecture, then went on to Derby where some of Smith's friends had induced the

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 76.

<sup>2</sup>Undated letter in Smith Corn Law Papers.

Mayor to take the chair. Smith reported:

the Mayor was so astounded by what he called the violent language of the lecture that he left the meeting at its conclusion declaring that he has been imposed upon and that nothing could have induced him to preside at a meeting of Chartists. The next day we heard from all our friends that the Mayor was denouncing us in all quarters and had created a great prejudice against us among respectable classes.<sup>1</sup>

Smith consoled himself that in being confused with the Chartists they might at least get more working class support. There was a second lecture at Derby and, although Smith had to take the chair himself, Paulton was received with much popular enthusiasm. The next stop was Leicester where Smith reported their reception was cold and chillish. Paulton went on alone to Nottingham and then to Leeds. The Leeds free traders were fortunate in gaining the support of the leading industrialists and, by the beginning of 1839, had an active association for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The first lecture tour did bring free traders together to talk about forming associations to aid in Corn Law repeal, but there were few other tangible results.

In order to reach a wider audience than was possible with lectures, the Manchester Association issued on December 8 an address to every part of the country urging the formation of local anti-Corn Law associations.<sup>2</sup> Several of the Manchester free traders, who were also

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<sup>1</sup>Undated letter in Smith Corn Law Papers.

<sup>2</sup>"The Anti-Corn Law League--It's History and Prospects," Ecclectic Review (1844), pp. 202-203.

members of the Chamber of Commerce, presented a requisition to the President, George Wood, M. P., calling a special meeting of the Chamber to "take into consideration the propriety of petitioning Parliament for the repeal of the existing corn laws."<sup>1</sup> On December 13, 1838, a large meeting of the members of the Chamber took place; Richard Cobden, J. B. Smith, R. H. Greg, W. Rawson, Edward Ashworth, and several others spoke in favor of repeal. The meeting was adjourned until December 20 when the free traders had secured enough votes to pass the resolution urging the petitioning of Parliament for free trade against the wishes of the majority of the directors of the Chamber.

The remainder of December was spent by the association in sponsoring a series of lectures by Paulton in Salford and in planning for a great free trade dinner to be held in Manchester in January, 1839. Smith was busy trying to find out if Villiers was the best man that could be found to bring up repeal in the House.<sup>2</sup> Cobden secured the services of Joseph Parkes as the association's London agent. Parkes' unrivalled knowledge of English politics and his aid in securing the support of Brougham,

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<sup>1</sup> John Reilly, The History of Manchester (London: Judd & Glass, 1865), p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> Letter J. B. Smith to Joseph Brotherton, December 28, 1838.

Molesworth, and Ward for the repealers was invaluable to the new association.<sup>1</sup>

The Manchester free traders began 1839 with great enthusiasm and many plans for their new association. On January 10 a meeting was held in the York Hotel to:

consider the proper mode of carrying forward the proceedings of the Anti-Corn Law Association in a manner commensurate with the magnitude of the obstacles to be surmounted, and worthy of the object for which it has been established.<sup>2</sup>

With Mr. Holland Hoole in the chair, J. B. Smith proposed that in addition to getting up petitions on the repeal of the Corn Laws, the association should arrange for various repeal societies to send deputations to London and that these deputies should arrange to be heard at the bar of the House of Commons. The remainder of the meeting was given over to collecting a subscription which amounted to £1,800 in the room. By February 9 a total of £6,136 10s. had been collected.

Late in December of 1838, William Wier, of the Glasgow Anti-Corn Law Association, wrote to Manchester asking to meet with the Manchester repealers.<sup>3</sup> The Manchester Association expanded the idea and prepared for a national conference of anti-Corn Law associations which opened on January 22 with a dinner for all delegates and

<sup>1</sup>McCord, pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup>Prentice, I, 90.

<sup>3</sup>Undated letter, League Letter Book.



friends. Fourteen of the members of Parliament who had voted for Villiers' last motion to repeal the Corn Laws were present, as were the Master Cutler of Sheffield and the mayors of Manchester, Hull, Bolton, Leeds, and Lancaster.<sup>1</sup> On the following evening a dessert was held at the Corn Exchange, with eleven of the various delegates speaking. After meeting for three days the conference decided to adjourn to London early in February. In the meantime local associations were urged to gather evidence against the Corn Laws and to prime witnesses in anticipation that Villiers would succeed in his proposition that members of the conference should be heard at the bar of the House of Commons.

Paulton had been actively lecturing throughout January, 1839. At the dinner on the 23rd, Paulton reported that he had spoken in seven counties, addressed upwards of 80,000 persons, and:

he conceived from what he had experienced of the popular feelings, that the alleged unwillingness of the working classes to join in the movement was not borne out by facts.<sup>2</sup>

An example of Paulton's lectures were the two delivered in the Assembly Rooms, Oldham. The reserved seats, at one shilling each, were occupied by master cotton spinners, manufacturers, and others of the middle class; and the

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Prentice, I, 103.

remainder of the large room, to which admission was free, was crowded by the laboring population. Paulton began by tracing the progress of legislation on the importation and concluded by condemning the landowners for legislating the suffering of the people.<sup>1</sup>

On January 28, 1839, the Manchester Association held its first annual meeting. J. B. Smith took the chair and was subsequently elected president. The rules of the association were discussed and adopted. The subscriptions were fixed at five shillings a year; the sole object of the association was to be the repeal of the Corn Laws, no side issues were to be allowed to creep into the campaign, nor was Corn Law repeal to be attached to other worthy causes such as Chartism or the reform of Parliament.

Paulton was sent up to London to begin a period of intensive lecturing in late January and early February to prepare the way for the London conference. Although the route by which the Queen drove to open Parliament was placarded with demands for cheap bread,<sup>2</sup> it is uncertain how successful Paulton's lectures were. C. J. S. Walker, the Vice-President of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association, complained:

Last night I went to hear Paulton lecture at the Crown and Anchor, the audience did not amount to one hundred persons, altho' the admissions was free, so

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, January 30, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 45.

much for the excitement here; I was sadly disappointed with the lecture. Paulton is in my opinion much too declamatory and abusive and asserts some things which will not bear the test of argument & searching examination. I am convinced he will be of little service here; this between ourselves. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Both Walker and the League's London agent, Parkes, warned the League that it was useless to think of holding large meetings in London for the Chartists would immediately swamp them.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the dubious results of Paulton's London lectures the Manchester Association was forced to pay his expenses and the cost of the agitation was high as was indicated in the following account prepared by Paulton:

	£	s.	d.
Advertising lectures in <u>Sun and Morning Chronicle</u> - 6s. each	1	4	0
Theatre at Mechanics Institute 2 nights at £3 3s. a night	6	6	0
Three door keepers per night 1/6 each		9	0
Feb. 11 Placard Men 12-2/6 a day	1	10	0
Feb. 12 Placard Men 12-2/6 a day	1	10	0
Feb. 16 Board Men	1	10	0
Posting 400 bills	1	0	0

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<sup>1</sup>Undated letter, Wilson Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Letter Parkes to Cobden, February 1, 1839; Walker to Wilson, February 16, 1839.

	£	s.	d.
Posting 400 larger sheets	1	10	0
Crown and Anchor Bill for 2 nights	13	13	0
Paid Daniel Roch for Boardmen . . .	4	0	0
Paid Mr. Elliot for print- ing 3150 large posters and landbills and half sheets	7	10	0
	£40	2	0
Personal Expenses			
. . . General Arrangements made at expense of the Institution		7	0
Marylebone lecture		5	0
Expenses Maidstone	1	7	0
	£42	1	0
Expenses 1st Feb. to 6 April	£42	0	0
Paid as per	42	1	0
	£84	1	0
Expenses	3	0	0
Total <sup>1</sup>	£87	1	0

Paulton's expenses were paid by a special donation of £50 by Cobden, £15 by J. B. Smith and £50 by a donor whose name is unreadable.

Every detail of the London conference was planned

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<sup>1</sup>In Smith Corn Law Papers.

with care by the Manchester free traders. The answers from invitations to the conference indicated that many associations and supporters of repeal had doubts that the best policy was to hold out for total abolition of the Corn Laws. At the same time the Manchester free traders knew that only the doctrine of total and immediate repeal could unite the majority of the repealers; thus Cobden and Smith with the support of Joseph Sturge and others made careful preliminary arrangements. First, they planned that a strong "total and immediate" man should be elected to the chair on each day of the conference and they arranged to secure the full cooperation of the liberal press even to the extent of suppressing parts of an injudicious speech made by Boulton, a delegate from Birmingham.<sup>1</sup> To further protect the pending conference, several of the Manchester delegates went up to London early. It was fortunate they did for they were able to stop Hume, one of the older radical M. P.s, from moving an anti-Corn Law amendment to the Address and thus stealing the thunder of the London conference and reducing Villiers' motion to an anti-climax.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the careful preparations Cobden had no hope for accomplishments from the conference. He cautioned Smith not to

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Walker to Wilson, February 13, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, pp. 44-45.

expect too much of the agitation because:

my hopes of agitation are anchored in Manchester. We can do more there with a sovereign than a committee in London would with two. . . . They will not agree to your being heard at the bar. Don't let us lose our time and money over the members of a committee but let all our funds and all our energies be expended in working the question from Manchester as a center . . . the House must be changed, before we can get justice. All our efforts then must be directed upon the constituencies & to strike a blow that will be responded to by every large town, let us begin in Manchester.<sup>1</sup>

The delegates assembled on Monday, February 4, at Brown's Hotel; by Tuesday the majority had arrived, many not wishing to travel on Sunday.<sup>2</sup> The delegates were soon met with several rebuffs. Both Lord John Russell and the Duke of Wellington refused to meet with a deputation of Leaguers. Then the most damaging reversal occurred in the House. In seconding the Address, the President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Mr. George William Wood, pleased at being chosen to give the seconding speech by the ministers, mentioned the injurious effects to manufacturers and laborers of the exclusion of foreign corn but continued at length to describe the prosperity of the country and to minimize the extent of the depression. The effect of his speech is best described by the London

Examiner:

There was something at once painful and ludicrous in the effect which this part of Mr. Wood's speech produced. The astonishment of the advocates of free

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Cobden to J. B. Smith, February 3, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 45.

trade in the house--the whispered assurances of the sagacious that 'Wood was a deep fellow, and would wind it all round before he sat down'--the respectful attention of Sir Robert Peel--the startling applause of the country gentlemen--and the unconscious, earnest, and solemn complacency with which the orator himself continued, brick by brick, to demolish the foundations of the castle he was commissioned to garrison--made what play writers call 'a situation,' that would have been irresistibly droll, if the House of Commons were the Adelphi Theatre, and the Corn Laws a farce, instead of a question involving the interests of millions, and perhaps, fraught with a fearful tragedy. Sir Robert Peel adroitly availed himself of Mr. Wood's statements. With cutting irony, he thanked the honourable member for Kendal for the very able speech he had delivered in favour of the existing system, and, with all the art of a practiced debater, expressed his hope that the House would pause before it acceded to any propositions which would have the effect of exchanging a law thus proved to be beneficial, and which would materially affect the agricultural interests of this country, having received from the President of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester the account which had been given them of the stable and secure position of our commerce and manufacturers.<sup>1</sup>

The Manchester men were quick to retaliate. In a general meeting of the Chamber, Cobden rallied both the free trade members and other free traders such as John Bright, whom he induced to join, to depose Wood from the presidency. J. B. Smith was elected as the new president and a new board of directors, all free traders, were installed.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime the London conference was stuck with Wood's disgrace. Besides providing superb newspaper copy Wood's speech alienated much of the possible metropolitan support.

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 108-109.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 47.

The conference spent most of its time preparing material which it hoped would be presented at the bar of the House of Commons. Every part of the country sent details of the harm done to each community by the Corn Laws; thousands of signatures on petitions for repeal were sent to Villiers for presentation. On February 18 Villiers moved that the petitions be referred to a committee of the whole House; this motion was negated without a division. On the following day Villiers again presented a number of petitions and moved:

that J. B. Smith, Robert Hyde Greg, and others, be heard at the bar of this House, by their witnesses, agents, or counsel, in support of the allegations of their petitions presented to the House.<sup>1</sup>

The division was one hundred seventy-two for the motion and three hundred sixty-one against the motion. The delegates were bitter at the refusal and, since no plans had been made for such a development, they continued to sit for a few days then separated for home to report to their individual associations, to receive instructions, and to gather again in London when Villiers moved his annual anti-Corn Law resolution in the House a few weeks later. J. B. Smith consoled himself that:

there is one good effect of our meeting in London which is beginning to show itself strikingly and that is that the publication of our proceedings in the newspapers is exciting all over the country a deep interest which is now manifesting itself by

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 112-113.



communications and thanks and good wishes and sympathy in our labours from all quarters. . . .<sup>1</sup>

On February 28 the returning Manchester delegates met with the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association to report on the London conference. Prentice, an eyewitness to the events of this meeting, reported the Chartists' interference that the repealers had to contend with in the early part of the anti-Corn Law struggle:

. . . a number of noisy vagabonds had been brought there for the express purpose of disturbing the proceedings. Several members had addressed the meeting, when a person, who had since repented of the course he then took, demanded the right of speaking before a working man named Moore, and because the chairman decided in favour of Moore speaking, proposed to place in the chair one whom he called 'honest Pat Murphy,' a potato-wheeler in Shudehill, who whatever his honesty might be, was not very cleanly, and very far from being sober. The scene that followed was unexampl'd in Manchester, and almost baffled description. Upon the proposer calling out, 'will you take the chair, Pat Murphy?' one drunken and very dirty fellow mounted the table, his clogs making deep indentations on its surface, and bruising the reporter's hands which were in his way, began to insult everybody who asked him to get off, and replied to one who asked him to desist: 'D--n thy e'en, if theau spakes to me aw'll put me clogs i' thy chops.' The proposer then moved that Pat Murphy take the chair, and cried 'Come on Pat.' The man was then pushed or dragged over the heads of the people, amidst great noise and confusion, and took his place before Mr. Thomas Harbottle, the chairman. The conclusion of the scene is thus reported:--'Proposer: "Gentlemen, three cheers for Stephens"--the cheers were given. "Three groans for Archibald Prentice"--and the groans were given. Mr. Prentice expressed his thanks for the compliment. "Gentlemen, three cheers for the National Convention." (Cheers) "Three cheers for Oastler." (Cheers) "Hand up the chair for Pat Murphy." Some fellows here seized chairs which were in various parts of the room,

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<sup>1</sup>Letter J. B. Smith to Manchester Association, February 13, 1839.

and threw them at the heads of the persons who stood on the stage. The consequence was a scene of riot and confusion ensued, several gentlemen being severely hurt by the ruffians, who smashed the forms and glasses of the lamps. The respectable persons of the meeting, with the chairman, then quitted the room, and left it in the possession of the ringleader, who congratulated the meeting upon having done his bidding, and his party, who, we are informed, passed a vote of thanks to the delegates to the National Convention by way of amendment to the original motion. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The Manchester Association met again on Tuesday, March 4. This time the admission was by ticket only and the business of the meeting proceeded without interruption. Cobden denounced the intrusion upon free discussion and quietly behind the scenes made plans for breaking the hold of the Chartists on Manchester.

The delegates from the various associations assembled in Manchester on March 7 at the Corn Exchange to find means of influencing the members of the House of Commons. The delegates met again on the 8th in Manchester, then adjourned to London. On March 12 Villiers moved that the House dissolve itself into a committee of the whole to take into consideration the Act 9. George IV. regulating the importation of foreign corn.<sup>2</sup> After five sittings the division was taken with one hundred eighty-five for and three hundred forty-two against. This time the delegates were ready with a plan of action. The assembled conference of anti-Corn Law delegates set up a permanent

<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 116-117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

Anti-Corn Law League. On March 20 the rules of the new League were approved. A council of large subscribers (with £50 bringing one vote), would govern the associations and Manchester was to be the headquarters of the new League. A subscription of £5,000 was to be sought in order that the League might begin a stamped circular, a pamphlet campaign, to secure the support of the press, and to hire and dispatch competent lecturers. In the following months various associations wrote to the League asking for affiliation. Some such as Huddersfield were able to send £50 toward the League effort and others such as Birmingham explained that their funds were low and that they would in the future attempt to send something.

The League began an active propaganda campaign during March, 1839. An advertisement in the Manchester Guardian, of March 5, 1839, by Gadsby, the League's Manchester printer, announced that nearly 20,000 copies of one of Cobden's speeches had been sold for one penny each or one hundred for six shillings. Villiers wrote to Smith in March that he would send a copy of his speech bringing forward his motion against the Corn Laws just as soon as he had finished it; this was presumably for pamphlet printing.<sup>1</sup> Paulton's lectures had been printed. Throughout its life the League printed extensively the speeches of its leaders and lecturers. On April 16, 1839, the first

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Villiers to J. B. Smith, March 19, 1839.

number of the Anti-Corn Law Circular appeared and within weeks it had achieved a circulation of 15,000.

Paulton had been the only paid lecturer for the Manchester Association but apparently in anticipation of the formation of the League, Cobden, J. B. Smith, and George Wilson had been searching for other candidates. The League had some difficulty finding the kind of man they wanted. Because of the political system of the nineteenth century the profession of political agent or lecturer was not in good repute.<sup>1</sup> Few men of standing were willing to sacrifice their reputation. Also Ashworth noted that:

the speakers at these meetings very often found that corn was a dry subject to talk about, and one that did not easily admit of a popular style of address to an audience.<sup>2</sup>

The Council "found it no small difficulty to provide a class of men who would be painstaking and observant, and who could also address an audience with judgment and effect."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, by April, 1839, the League had added four new lecturers to their staff.

As early as February 4 Cobden wrote to J. B. Smith asking if the Association ought to try Sidney Smith as a lecturer or if they could find a man in London. Sidney

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Ashworth, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-37.

Smith, former editor of the Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle, was a solicitor in partnership with two others in their own business in Edinburgh. Of his background he wrote to the League:

I have occasionally lectured in various places in England and Scotland. The success which has attended my labours and the popularity which I have been enabled to achieve, have convinced me that the profession of a public teacher is one which I am capable of following with advantage to the community and the degree of eminence which I had obtained in this pursuit may be best judged of the recommendations of those who have mentioned my name to the Association . . . to itinerate as a paid lecturer must necessarily be attended with injurious consequence to my character and standing as a Solicitor. The sacrifice is considerable. The labour must also be very great accompanied with all the discomforts of continual change to one who has been accustomed to a settled home.<sup>1</sup>

Although some of the Leaguers doubted his speaking ability, Sidney Smith was hired as a lecturer.<sup>2</sup> In a letter to the Council accepting his appointment Smith proposed that he try the experiment of lecturing on a trial basis before any permanent arrangement was negotiated. He was to receive four guineas per lecture and the Council was to defray all costs except traveling. It was the respectability of Smith's former position which the League hoped would make him a valuable asset. They even hired a political agent, J. H. Shearman, to precede Smith on his tours and to make all the preliminary arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Sidney Smith to the Executive Council, February 25, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Letter in League Letter Book, April 4, 1839.

Shearman, recommended by Joseph Sturge, had served as secretary to the Voluntary Church Society at Birmingham before he was hired by the League.

With high hopes for success the Council sent Smith and Shearman off to eastern England. At Wakefield Smith lectured on April 8 and again on the 10th when an Anti-Corn Law Association was formed. Shearman went on to Doncaster where he reported that anti-Corn Law sentiment received much opposition from the Tories. In spite of this opposition an association was formed, but the new secretary told Shearman that he was a marked man.

When Shearman arrived at Louth he consulted the Mayor about the use of the town hall. He was told he must see the twenty-four men of the town council and get their permission. After obtaining some fourteen signatures Shearman was able to rent the hall for Smith's lectures. About one thousand farmers, landowners, shopkeepers, twenty of the town council, plus several of the borough magistrates arrived for the first lecture. Smith lectured for two and a half hours, then asked to be allowed to reserve the answering of questions for the following evening. After one of the council members made a nasty speech about the promised discussion Smith lit into his accusers. Shearman came forward to answer the charge that Smith, a Scotsman, knew nothing of English problems. The evening ended abruptly when the Tory opponents left the

building. After three cheers for Smith, the audience also left. About two hours before the second lecture Smith received a letter from the mayor, stating that several respectable inhabitants of the borough had waited on him to request that the lecturer should not be allowed the use of the town hall. After Shearman protested loudly the mayor said he supposed they would just have to use the market place again. At the appointed hour a gig was drawn up and Smith and Shearman spoke to two to three thousand people. When they were about to start for Boston the next morning Smith and Shearman were served a warrant demanding their immediate appearance at the court house. For disturbing the town, they were both fined five shillings which, because of the necessity of getting to Boston, they paid.

On April 27 at Boston Smith delivered a lecture from a wagon to upwards of two thousand persons "consisting of ladies, females of the humbler class, farmers, landowners, merchants, ploughmen, sailors from the port, and labourers assembled in the market place."<sup>1</sup> The choice of open air was not Smith's; both the theatre and the town hall had been refused for his lectures.

James Acland was the third of the new lecturers hired in April, 1839. He had been a radical agitator at least since the crises of 1830-32 and was recommended to

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, May 14, 1839.

the League by Parkes, as an experienced and useful man.<sup>1</sup> Acland was sent to south-west England where he faced stiff opposition from the dominating landed interests. That Acland was hardworking and loyal was apparent from even his first month's labors, but he was also rash. Apparently the Council had warned Acland to be more careful in his actions for in a letter written about April 16 he replied, "Do not imagine that . . . I contemplate a rash and head-long defiance. I never remember to have felt so prudent as on the present occasion. . . ." <sup>2</sup> With this letter he enclosed a poster announcing his lectures at Exeter in the following manner:

Subscription Assembly Room, Exeter  
On Tuesday Evening, April 16, 1839,  
Mr. Acland will have the honour of delivering

A GRATUITOUS LECTURE  
On the Accursed Corn Laws

In demonstration of their blasphemous and unnatural character, their unhuman tendency, and their destructive consequences to every interest in this vast community--especially to that of the industrial agriculturists and not excepting even that of the lord of the soil, the legislative monopolist, the feudal inflector of universal calamity.<sup>3</sup>

The Circular reported that Mr. Acland delivered a lecture to an assembly of fourteen to fifteen hundred on the ruinous effects of the Corn Laws.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Acland's

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>In League Letter Book.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, April 30, 1839.



usefulness was such that he remained with the League for the entire campaign against the Corn Laws.

Acland's success even in the face of stiff opposition was due in part to his method of meeting all opponents of any class in face to face discussion. He announced such a discussion to follow the Exeter lecture:

Thursday Evening, April 18, 1839,  
Mr. Acland will meet his opponents in the above room in

PUBLIC DISCUSSION  
of the important question--

Is not the immediate and total repeal of the existing Corn Laws imperatively necessary in justice to the people, in order to the welfare of all classes of society and to our permanent prosperity as a nation.

The affirmative will have been maintained by Mr. Acland in his address of Tuesday evening. The discussion will therefore be opened by an opponent-- Mr. Acland speaking alternately with the defenders of the Corn Laws, and each speech being restricted within a quarter of an hour.

No person shall take part in the discussion, who shall not have been present at the previous Lecture.

A chairman to be appointed by the meeting, on each occasion, and the decision of those present to be taken at the close of the discussion.<sup>1</sup>

Acland lectured in Tiverton on April 24. In spite of a strong Tory agricultural opposition and repeated attempts at a disturbance of the meeting he could report that he received a unanimous decision on the proposition, "ought the Corn Laws to be immediately and wholly

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<sup>1</sup>In League Letter Book.

repealed?"<sup>1</sup> After taking on six opponents in a discussion at Honiton on the 25th Acland spoke nightly and gave four morning lectures before the end of the month.<sup>2</sup>

Like Sidney Smith, Acland received four guineas a lecture out of which he paid his traveling expenses with the League paying all other lecture expenses. The types of extra expenses can be seen from Account #3 submitted to the League by Acland on April 28, 1839:<sup>3</sup>

Balance from no. 2--		25.17.6
Honiton expenses 2 lectures		
Assembly Room	4. 4.0	
Printing	2. 0.0	
Posting,		
Delivery &		
Attendance	9.0	
Wax Candles	3.6	6.16.6
Lecturer		8. 8.0
Lyme 1 lecture		
Assembly Room	1.10.0	
Candles	2.0	
Printing	1.12.0	
Bill delivery	5.0	3. 9.0
Lecturer		4. 4.0
Bridport 1 lecture		
Town Hall	0. 0.0	
Printing and posting	1.14.0	1.14.0
Lecturer		4. 4.0
		<hr/> 54.13.0

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to the League, April 23, 1839; Anti-Corn Law Circular, April 30, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Letters Acland to the League, April 23, 28, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>In League Letter Book.

Acland added a postscript to this account telling the League that he was without funds, and that he did not want to have to worry about money when he was trying to worry about the opposition. Acland was continually without money throughout his career, but part of the difficulties of 1839 were due to a lack of funds at League headquarters.

Although not in the full-time employ of the League, George Greig, the secretary of the Leeds Anti-Corn Law Association, was lent to the League for lecturing in areas not too far from Leeds. In the spring of 1839, Greig was sent to Yorkshire, Northumberland, and Durham. His reception was sometimes hostile, but he reported no outstanding successes or defeats in his spring tour.

Paulton was received without incident as he lectured at Worcester, Kidderminster, Dudley, and Cheltenham. At Tamworth he applied to the mayor for the town hall which was refused. Next the two principal innkeepers refused an application for the use of their large rooms. The chairman of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association wrote to the mayor asking why Paulton was unable to obtain a room for his lecture but received only a "laconic" reply.<sup>1</sup> At Hereford Paulton hired the town crier to announce his lectures in all the streets about the middle of the day and again just before the lecture in the evening. He thus obtained a "tolerably strong" audience.

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, April 16, 1839.

Nevertheless, he reported to the League that the shopkeepers and middle class men were either directly or indirectly under the influence of the neighboring landowners and didn't think it prudent to be honest to their convictions.<sup>1</sup> Sometime about the nineteenth of April Paulton reported to Cobden that one of his meetings had been broken up by the Chartists, but he was not hurt.<sup>2</sup> Also about this time Paulton was in some kind of accident which caused the Circular to announce that Mr. Paulton was unable to lecture at Stroud, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, and Hereford as had been announced.<sup>3</sup> By April 31 according to Paulton's calculation (probably the 30th), he was back lecturing at Cheltenham and the Tories had nicknamed him the "firebrand."<sup>4</sup>

May was a month of small disasters for Sidney Smith and Shearman. They arrived at Stamford on May 1 to lecture to some two thousand persons in the theatre. The Circular described the lecture:

the police were all in attendance. The pit and gallery were filled chiefly with the working classes and many females. The boxes and upper boxes contained many farmers, large landowners, magistrates, merchants and some ladies. The lecturer proceeded but was frequently interrupted by the gentlemen landowners, merchants, and farmers with their insulting language

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Paulton to the League, April 27, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>In League Letter Book.

<sup>3</sup>April 30, 1839.

<sup>4</sup>Letter Paulton to the League, May 1, 1839.

and abominable epithets. The rest of the audience were in a state of extreme excitement at this conduct. The working men behaved admirably, but the better classes most shamefully, and many were drunk. . . . Mr. Smith again and again appealed to the occupants of the dress circle to be more decorous. But as they perservered until his patience became somewhat exhausted, he at last invited a number of persons in the pit and upper boxes to come to the dress boxes, and told the gentlemen he would then see whether they dared further to offer him annoyance. At once, one man leaped fair from the upper gallery upon the stage, and planted himself beside one of the rioters; many of the pit came to the boxes and being seated, exclaimed, 'Go on Mr. Smith.'<sup>1</sup>

After another threat of mob action, Smith was allowed to conclude his lecture. On the following night with the boxes nearest the stage occupied by respectable men from the working classes, Smith and Shearman were both able to lecture in safety and an association was formed. Shearman credited the working classes or the "rabble, as they were called, and the police with saving his head from being broke;" the Whigs had joined the Tories in the Stamford attack.<sup>2</sup>

The first lecture on May 9 at Huntingdon was well received. The second lecture was disturbed by "gentlemen rabble and aristocratic Chartists."<sup>3</sup> Smith agreed for the sake of peace to give up his lecture, stipulating that his opponents should quit the field first, so they might not be able to boast of having put him down.

<sup>1</sup>May 14, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Letter Shearman to the League, May 2, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, May 14, 1839.

The greatest disaster of the Shearman-Smith trip was Cambridge. Readers of the Circular were first introduced to the matter in the following:

The labours of the Council of the Anti-Corn Law League were this morning interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Shearman from Cambridge, bearing a large blue sack, the contents of which, upon being emptied upon the table, proved to be the remains of university caps and gowns, (the former very much broken and the latter torn) together with fragments of divers benches and chairs, which were gathered up by him after the riot in the Theatre at Cambridge. As many of our plodding neighbors have yet to learn how the members of our learned corporations dress, we invite all who are curious in matters of academic costume to inspect the contents of our blue bag. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Shearman was in Cambridge as early as May 8 attempting to obtain a room for Smith's lectures. He wrote the League that only the theatre could be obtained and then only for £10 for one night, £10 for two nights, or £20 for three nights.<sup>2</sup> He told the Council that he considered arranging for the meeting to be held out of doors but had been informed that he would not get any of the respectable inhabitants that way, and that there was less chance of the police being able to control such a crowd. The League decided to take the theatre for two nights and on Monday evening, May 13, Smith arrived to give his first lecture to some seven hundred persons including mayor, magistrates, members of the universities, and collegians. Shearman briefly introduced the meeting

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, May 28, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Letter Shearman to League, May 8, 1839.

to the purpose of their visit; Smith began by referring to the treatment they had received in the agricultural districts, then continued:

here, I think I already feel that I can breathe more freely. I congratulate myself that for nearly the first time since I left Manchester I have set foot on a civilized territory,<sup>1</sup> and out of the country of British savages. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Shearman concluded the evening with an account of the Huntingdon riot which elicited cries of shame from the audience.

The second lecture at Cambridge was held on Tuesday, May 14. The mayor received word that those who were responsible for the Huntingdon riot had been in communication with the Cambridge gownsmen. He warned Smith not to go through with the lecture but Smith could not be persuaded, for he believed that order would be kept by the ordinary citizens. As soon as the doors of the theatre were opened, the pit and part of the boxes were speedily occupied by mechanics and respectable citizens; the upper boxes and gallery were also filled by townsmen. About one hundred fifty gownsmen came together and filled up all the boxes on the speaker's right. A friend whispered to Smith that he saw all the leading bullies from the university in that one crowd, and that there would be a regular row. The constables arrived and on seeing the gownsmen, left their great coats with the doorkeeper as they saw they

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, May 28, 1839.

were going to have "warm work" of it. When Smith appeared on stage he was met by applause from the townsmen and shouts and hoots from the gownsmen. As he began to speak his voice was immediately drowned out by shouts and the blowing of a guard's horn. After several attempts to begin Smith remarked to the disturbers, "from men of education, I expected the conduct of gentlemen." This was met by renewed laughter and cries of, "Out with them," and "Down with the blackguards." After several more verbal exchanges, with the townspeople taking Smith's part, the gownsmen exhibited their clubs. The townsmen rose from the pit and climbed into the boxes and a regular battle resulted. Hats, gowns, surtouts, and coats flew in all directions. With the interference of the police quiet was obtained and Smith was able to continue for about ten minutes when the gownsmen returned to the battle. Benches were torn up and used as weapons. The issue was a complete overthrow of the gownsmen, their expulsion from the theatre amid deafening shouts of victory, and three cheers for Smith. Smith continued for some fifteen minutes unmolested when the gownsmen, who had gone back to the university for reinforcements, returned and broke open the doors. More chairs, benches, and planks were requisitioned for weapons and another battle ensued. The click of hundreds of sticks mingled with yells and shouts; men were going out with large gashes on their heads, arms, and



legs. The mayor implored Smith to leave but he stood his ground. At last the gownsmen were kicked and beaten out of the house, and the townsmen resumed their seats amid tremendous applause and proudly clutched the torn gowns, fragments of caps, and tails of coats--the symbols of their victory. Smith was invited to continue. He spent only a few minutes reprimanding the rioters and praising the working men then concluded the lecture. The next day Smith heard from many quarters that the riot had much advanced their cause in Cambridge among the respectable people at least. Warned that his life was in danger if he remained in Cambridge, Smith went on to Sabden to lecture on May 15 and 16. Shearman stayed on in Cambridge to attempt to collect for the damages from the rioters and to attempt to regain some of the League's reputation by giving three moral and religious addresses to the people on Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

James Acland spent the month of May in southern England. On May 1 he lectured to eight hundred people in the town hall, Devonport, was well received, and had no opposition. On May 2 and 3 Acland was in Tavistock for three lectures. The first evening he lectured to the miners, agriculturists, and tradesmen without opposition. On the following day he lectured to the farmers in the

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<sup>1</sup>Entire account in Anti-Corn Law Circular, May 28, 1839.

corn market in the morning and in the evening had a three hour discussion in the Institute before some 1,200 people. Acland won the discussion 1196 to 4. He continued to Dartmouth and Totnes where his lectures were uncontested.

Acland stopped lecturing for a week to ten days in May. In a letter to Wilson, he explained, "I am very hoarse . . . my lungs must lie fallow for a few days if possible." Also he was busy on an article for the Circular which Cobden had suggested he write. He rented a horse and spent the week getting "chapter and verse" on the state of the agricultural laborers in Devonshire. Of his effect in Devon, Acland reported, "I carry the majority with me--viz the operative farmer--whilst I set the gentlemen farmer or farming capitalist . . . at defiance." Acland also noted that he often carried the Chartists with him in that district.<sup>1</sup>

On May 20 the crowd was so great in the Old Methodist Chapel at Stratton that a window was removed so Acland could take up a position on a temporary platform whereby he was enabled "to deal out impartial justice to the ins and outs."<sup>2</sup> One hour before the lecture was to begin at Callington the use of the town hall was withdrawn, but a large enthusiastic audience gathered in front of the Market-House Inn and Acland lectured from a temporary

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, June 11, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 28, 1839.

platform. The North Devon Journal thought Acland's noon-hour lectures at Barnstaple powerful and noted that:

the unhesitating challenge of all opponents--the promptitude with which they are met--the readiness and tact of his replies to those who question at the conclusion of his lectures, have secured to this gentleman, the general approval of his audiences  
 . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Of his own successes at this time, Acland told Wilson:

It is the full and fair discussion after the lecture (and previously announced) which carries us . . . in this hostile part of the country. Any interruptions might thus be made a question of time only, instead of being made with hold your tongue or walk out.<sup>2</sup>

Of the ultimate winning of Devon, Acland warned Wilson, "do not calculate on active friends in these counties. Public opinion is with us but private opinion can scarcely open its mouth."<sup>3</sup> Acland spent the remainder of the month lecturing and discussing at Liskeard, Bridgeport, and Ashburton. In five weeks he gave twenty-six lectures and held twenty-three discussions. By the end of May Acland was preparing to go into Cornwall and asked Wilson for specific instructions as to the towns to be worked.

Paulton spent the first part of May lecturing at Gloucester, Stroud, and Tewkesbury. Apparently at this time Paulton was recalled to Manchester. He gave one other lecture in May at Rochdale, where he and a gentleman

<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to Wilson, May 5, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, June 11, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., May 28, 1839.

by the name of J. Bright supported repeal and the necessity of information to a working class audience.

Shearman, Smith, and Paulton were recalled to Manchester in May and Acland in June because of the financial difficulties of the League. The £5,000 authorized by the London conference could not be raised. The Scottish Association had promised £2,000, but by the end of May nothing had arrived. The expenses of the Circular were heavy; the paper never did pay its way and in May the League was informed it must be considered a newspaper and bear the stamp. The expenses of lecturing were heavy: in some cases heavier than the Council had expected. The visit to Cambridge alone had cost £50. The Council decided to send Paulton and Shearman to Scotland to attempt to collect some of the promised funds. Acland returned to southern England to carry on his work there, and Sidney Smith remained in the Manchester district.<sup>1</sup>

Paulton set up four headquarters--Dundee, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Dumfries--for systems of lectures in Scotland. For three months he lectured almost every night. At times he discussed with the Chartists but complained that while the Chartists "bawled" out for liberty, they seemed determined not to allow the same liberty to others to advocate any opinions except those contained in the

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 65.

Charter.<sup>1</sup> The support of the Dissenters was strong, and Paulton was often offered the use of Dissenting chapels for his lectures. In the larger cities of Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh he spoke to thousands at a time and was well received. Nevertheless, Paulton was unable to obtain any of the promised £2,000. Sidney Smith, in a letter to Wilson, explained why:

People in Scotland think Paulton a chartist. Many protest against his flowery oratory and in short they are abundantly ill tempered . . . Paulton's mission here has been a [mistake] as I told you it would be but I also told you what has been completely verified by the fact that his impulsive and declamatory style, although it would carry all the working men, would not suit the men who have purses and votes.

I have been exceedingly annoyed with the thousands of good natured friends who are all so kind and so critical. I don't think Paulton is wrong at all but I fear that what is right won't suit this fastidious, carping, praise-poor, paltry place. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Smith was accurate, at least, in his prediction that the men with money would not be reached by Paulton, but his criticism of Paulton's style of oratory is more accurately a reflection of his own speaking style. Shearman, who was actually sent to collect the money while Paulton whipped up the enthusiasm, talked of the elections and of the need to break ground as difficulties not yet overcome. Shearman also complained that the leaders of the Scottish Association would not let him begin a canvass for the money himself and that they would not do it themselves so

<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, August 6, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>July 20, 1839.

he despaired of getting anything. While waiting for the Scottish Association to do something Shearman gave religious and moral lectures on the Corn Laws which were quite popular with the people but which were outside his instructions from the League and eventually led to his dismissal in October.

Sidney Smith was offered the post of secretary to the League and editor of the Circular in July, 1839, at a salary of £200 per year.<sup>1</sup> He continued to lecture in June and early in July only near Manchester in such places as Liverpool and Lancaster with a northern tour through Colne, Burnley, Clitheroe, and Sabden in the hundred of Blackburn.

Acland, early in June, 1839, acknowledged instructions to lecture only in the electoral boroughs but noted that he must fulfill all the commitments already made. He reported several successes in Cornwall. At Redruth Acland was telling the audience of the League's desire to repeal the Corn Laws by the "omnipotence of public opinion," when he was interrupted by cries of "one and all." Acland replied:

Yes, when one and all who live by the sweat of their brow shall have become aware of the cause of their scanty fare, the bread monopolists of the legislature must concede justice to the bread eaters of the land.

The audience then happily interrupted every point, with

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<sup>1</sup>Letter J. B. Smith to Sidney Smith, July 3, 1839.

which they agreed, with loud cries of "one and all."<sup>1</sup>

By July 10 Acland reported his voice was getting hoarse from seven successive night lectures in the open air. The Cornwall Advertiser noted that at Acland's Camelford lecture, "a knot of gentlemen seemed determined to howl the lecturer out of voice;" after a stone of considerable size was thrown and hit Acland on the chest the people rushed the rock throwers and carted them off. Acland was then allowed to finish his lecture.<sup>2</sup> From Newport the Hampshire Telegraph reported heavy sparring between Acland and the Chartists. At Petersfield the situation was further complicated. An agent of Sir William Jolliffe had refused the use of the town hall. Acland determined to give his lecture in the space beneath the hall but the high constable ousted him from that place. Finally Acland mounted the railing of the equestrian statue of William III in the market square and began his lecture with a censure of the illiberal conduct of the two officials. Acland held three meetings in Gosport. The first was a lecture, the second a lecture-discussion, and the third evening Acland met a Mr. T. Hoskins in debate.<sup>3</sup> After the debate only two hands were raised for

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, June 25, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., June 11, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>The term debate will be used instead of discussion in this study only when the League papers or the lecturer himself have used the term.

fixed duty.

Acland was not without Chartist interruptions in southern England. At Brighton he reported having a long and spirited discussion with the Chartists, and during the second lecture at Petersfield he was interrupted by half a dozen "drunken louts" whom the crowd drove out of the square. In August the landlord of the Dolphin Inn at Shoreham withdrew the use of his large room after Acland had paid in advance for it. The landlord attempted to absolve himself completely by sending out a crier around the town announcing that the lectures would not be held as scheduled. Nevertheless, at the appointed hour a group of working men assembled outside the Inn and sent for Acland. He spoke to them for an hour and, with their help, found a room for two lectures. Acland was interrupted in his lecture at Lewes by a policeman who asked Acland to move on. Acland asked the policeman who sent him and the policeman moved on for further instructions leaving Acland to finish his lecture. For the five weeks ending in July, 1839, Acland averaged six lectures a week at an average expense of £6 17s. 10d. per lecture.

By the end of July the League was in severe financial difficulties. Acland's expenses alone during June, July, and early August cost the League £100 and the Council found it difficult to raise the money. Acland seems to have particularly suffered from this shortage. He



reported arriving at Arundel with five shillings to find the local farmers very hostile. One of them had offered a bushel of wheat to anyone who would throw Acland into the river. No innkeeper would let him have a room for a meeting and he could not leave town for he could not pay for his lodgings. He complained that there was not even a pawnbroker in town. Finally he left his clothes at the Inn and walked to Brighton, his next stop, hoping to find a remittance there. It was a few days more before money arrived there for him.

Acland's second tour marked the end of the League's first campaign. In July the Council decided to curtail its expenditures as much as possible. They would continue the Circular, which Smith was hired to edit, and retain one or two clerks until they could afford to begin a new campaign upon the "House of Landlords."<sup>1</sup>

During September when the harvests were brought in only Paulton was actively lecturing in Scotland. He spoke frequently and apparently met with little opposition with the exception of Stranraer, where a Mr. Kelly, editor of the Galloway Register, attempted to uphold the Corn Laws during Paulton's lecture. When the crowd became tired of Kelly's frequent interruptions they escorted him out of the room and Paulton was allowed to continue. On September 25 Paulton reported he had been lecturing every night

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<sup>1</sup>Letter J. B. Smith to Sidney Smith, July 24, 1839.

for nearly three hours during the last sixteen days and also traveling from twenty to fifty miles per day. His major additional activity was to gather subscriptions for the Circular, because he said, "a dozen of the Circulars in such towns will probably be read by almost the whole number of thinkers in the place."<sup>1</sup> Paulton remained in Scotland until the middle of October when he returned to Manchester.

It was late October, 1839, before the lecturing campaign was resumed. Acland began his agitation in typical fashion. While in Sussex during the previous July he had so much difficulty in finding an opponent he published an advertisement offering to give £10 to the county infirmary, providing a person of reputability and acknowledged as the representative of the landowners would meet him in Chichester in public discussion. During the summer the Staffordshire squires had procured the services of a Mr. Thorneycroft, a rich iron master, who was said to have the merit of raising himself up from the rank of a laboring man. At Wolverhampton a dinner was given to Thorneycroft and in a long speech he officially "came out" as the champion of the Bread-Tax. In the Circular<sup>2</sup> Leaguers were told the story of Thorneycroft and were assured that

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Paulton to George Wilson, September 5, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>October 15, 1839.

a gentleman (Acland) would be deputed by the Manchester Association to proceed immediately to Wolverhampton to publically discuss the question. Acland arrived in Wolverhampton on October 21 and lectured to the people that night from the gallery of the assembly rooms. So great was the crowd that was refused admission on the first night that the local Anti-Corn Law Association, who were handling all the arrangements, hired the theatre for the second and third lectures. Acland spent his second evening discussing Thorneycroft's fallacies, but the gentleman was not to be seen. On the third evening the pit, gallery, and boxes were so crowded that a curtain behind the stage was removed and the people were admitted to the area behind the speaker. Acland spoke for two and a half hours with no interruptions and no opponent. During the entire time Acland was in Wolverhampton there was no sign of the Bread-Tax champion and the League exulted in their victory with a headline in the Circular which read, "Thorneycroft Flummocked."<sup>1</sup>

The Circular of November 26, 1839, announced a new policy regarding the lecturers which apparently had gone into effect with the resumption of the lecturing in October:

The course consists of two lecturers. Any town within thirty miles of Manchester, may be provided with a lecturer on paying all the rent, gas, placards,

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<sup>1</sup>October 29, 1839.

and c. & c. and five pounds toward the funds of the League; if upwards of thirty miles and not exceeding 50, the contribution to be £7 10s., above fifty miles and within a hundred £10. This contribution to be in lieu of travelling charges.

A lecturer might be sent anywhere if the local association was willing to guarantee all lecture expenses and to pay the speaker's traveling expenses. Acland was working under this sytem late in October when he reported to Wilson that the £50 from Wolverhampton was to be sent immediately and that a deputation from Walsall had asked for a course of lectures which he consented to give if they found the room, got the placards, and undertook all in their power to create a fund of £50 in contribution toward the expenses of the League.<sup>1</sup> That the Walsall Association was good to their word, Acland testified in a later letter, "I delivered in my account for four lectures at four guineas at a meeting of the association last night and this morning received a cheque on the Treasurer for that amount."<sup>2</sup> On November 10 Acland assured Wilson that he would not make any further engagements for lecturing as a missionary of the League; thus it seems he operated for the remainder of the year on the local association payment plan where the local association saw fit or was able to pay him. For example, he complained that although his expenses were paid at Wolverhampton he did not receive a

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to Wilson, October 26, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., November 9, 1839.

penny for his lectures there. After Walsall Acland continued to West Brunswick but confessed to Wilson that he had his eye on Kidderminster where "I owe the Tories a settlement of Paulton's account."<sup>1</sup>

On November 6, 1839, the grateful inhabitants of Bolton gave Paulton a public dinner in honor of his successes in Scotland. The speakers' list read like a roll call of prominent Leaguers--Darbshire, Mayor of Bolton; Ainsworth, M. P.; Brotherton, M. P.; Cobden; J. B. Smith; Henry Ashworth; T. Ballantyne of Bolton Free Press; and John Bright.

Sidney Smith spent November and December making short lecture trips mainly in the northern counties. In a series of three lectures at the town hall, Salford he dwelt extensively on the fallacy that wages rise and fall with the price of bread. Smith continued to the Baptist Chapel in Haslingden where the audience was so enthusiastic that they had to be asked to restrain themselves for the safety of the new plaster work. At Newton when Smith spoke in the Presbyterian Chapel the millowners stopped the mills to enable the operatives to attend the lecture. Some operatives walked four to five miles to hear Smith lecture at Baccup. At Huddersfield the Chartists attempted to put down Smith's lecture in the philosophical hall but were put down themselves by the audience. With John

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to Wilson, November 9, 1839.

Bright in the chair at Rochdale and the admission at 1s. 6d., Smith was well received by the respectable merchants and manufacturers. Smith filled in for Paulton, who was ill, at the town hall in Longton where he talked of the arguments of the "little loaf men."<sup>1</sup> In the Methodist Chapel Newton Smith met Elijah Dixon in a three and a half hour debate. Each speaker was allowed only fifteen minutes at a time and no expressions of applause or disapprobation were to be permitted, but Dixon was frequently interrupted with cries of "question." The working men who signed an anti-Corn Law petition thought Smith had won the debate.

Perhaps, as McCord theorized, the most remarkable result of the first year's League agitation was its survival.<sup>2</sup> Many of the grand plans which were to prove successful in later years were severely hampered by the lack of money in 1839. The Circular continued in debt despite its acceptance of advertisements. The one bright spot was the constant flow of tracts, bills, and propaganda devices of all sorts which went out from the Manchester offices to the local associations. None of the lecturers had an entirely successful campaign. Sidney Smith divided his time between lecturing and writing for the Circular and in spite of his valuable contributions was not the

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, December 24, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 68.

respectable drawing card the League had hoped for. Paul-ton had done yeoman duty in Scotland, but failed to collect any of the money which was so badly needed by the League headquarters. Acland proved his value in his fighting spirit and, in spite of the state of his personal finances, was probably the most successful lecturer in dealing with hostile audiences.

A summary of the League's 1839 lecture activities dated January 14, 1840, in the Smith Corn Law Papers included the following:

400 lectures have been delivered by the lecturers engaged by the League in the principal towns in England and Scotland, in the agricultural districts, and in such places as were likely to influence the conduct or return of members of parliament. Six hundred thousand have been addressed. . . .

In no instance have their lectures been defeated in discussions or unsuccessful in carrying the public with them. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Although the last statement obviously was not completely true, the three lecturers with the assistance of Shearman probably did give some four hundred lectures during 1839. During the first year of the League's propaganda campaign the oral agitation, in the form of lectures and discussions, was the most prominent feature of the entire agitation. The relative importance of the lecture campaign can be seen in the following summary of expenditures for 1839:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Probably from the Manchester Times.

<sup>2</sup>Contained in the above report.

	£	s.	d.
Lectures	1236	1	11
Printing	872	9	0
Wages	146	2	6
Advertisements	57	4	9
Rent	7	17	6
Engraving	16	14	6

The Second Lecture Campaign: January, 1840 -  
August, 1840

By the beginning of 1840 the League had gained the status of a national pressure group. Even the hostile Morning Herald was forced to admit that the League was of such proportions that it must be reckoned with.<sup>1</sup> In order to gain national attention and to obtain money for the League the Council began the new year with a rally of delegates from the various local associations. On January 13 some two hundred delegates from over seventy-five towns plus several civic officials and members of Parliament assembled in Manchester.

Two spectacular occasions of this January conference were the two banquets: one on the 13th for the delegates and friends of repeal and the other on the 14th for the working men's associations.<sup>2</sup> As no building in

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, January 18, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>During most of the agitation covered by Prentice and by the Circular, there is a variance of one day



Manchester was large enough to handle the expected crowd, the League built a temporary pavilion on St. Peters Field which was lent for the occasion by Cobden. In eleven days one hundred men put up a canvas and wood structure of 15,750 square feet which seated 3,800 persons at some twenty-five tables placed from side to side. Twenty-four chandeliers lighted 20,000 yards of white and pink calico used as drapery; large mottoes calling for, "Total and Immediate Repeal," lined crimson drapes along the balconies.

The first banquet was a crowded success; all seats were occupied and a number of ladies were in the galleries. Various accounts of the banquet list from seven to sixteen speakers. Villiers, Gisborne, Bowring, and Milner Gibson--all members of Parliament--spoke. Sharman Crawford, a large Irish landowner and ardent free trader; George Thompson, a Negro emancipation advocate; and Ebenezer Elliot, the Corn Law rhymist, responded to toasts. Daniel O'Connell, the powerful advocate of Irish emancipation, added the weight of his prestige to repeal. Wilson reported on the League's activities; Cobden urged the delegates to further action. The next evening

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between the date given by Prentice and the date given by the Circular for the same event. Except where a letter from a League Council member establishes dates, the Circular's dates have been used in this study in the hope that the League's own paper printed during the agitation was more accurate.

virtually the same scene was enacted at the dinner for the working men.

In giving his report of the League activities Wilson noted that the association was in debt some £1,200 while the funds on hand amounted to only £500. Villiers announced that he would make another attempt on the Corn Laws in the coming session of Parliament. Then Wilson appealed to the delegates to contribute to the League's efforts to begin an expanded agitation. In this objective the January conference was successful; contributions began to come in from the various associations. Glasgow sent £500, Liverpool £300, and others lesser amounts. With money in hand the Council was able to expand its operations and again the League lecturers were sent to all parts of the country.

London was chosen for intensive agitation. This was the first attempt to begin a substantial campaign in the capital; many Leaguers who had close connections with the London radicals expected great things from the metropolis. Mr. H. Stansfield of Leeds wrote to J. B. Smith that, "a pistol discharged in the metropolis would produce as great an effect as a cannon here. . . ."<sup>1</sup> In addition to Parkes as their London agent the League secured through Warburton, a radical M. P., the services of Francis Place,

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<sup>1</sup>Letter, undated, in Smith Corn Law Papers.

the experienced organizer of the London radicals.<sup>1</sup> In February a Metropolitan Association was formed with H. S. Chapman as Secretary. Cobden urged that the new association begin an active, open campaign immediately, but Place and other radicals wanted first to work behind the scenes and build up a body of support before they came out in the open.<sup>2</sup>

The difficulties in organizing a campaign in London were massive.<sup>3</sup> Each London borough required as much time and money to agitate as would a separate town. Also the London free traders were not united. Place explained:

the great obstacle to a rapid progress in the City of London is that very many of the influential men are either for a fixed duty, or a sliding duty, and as we cannot concede what these men require they will not assist us. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Some of the League supporters complained that even the middle class in the city knew little and cared even less about the Corn Laws.

Into the London difficulties the League sent their two most experienced and respectable lecturers--Sidney Smith and Paulton. Paulton arrived first. His initial reports of lectures at Southwark were encouraging; he

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Graham Wallas, The Life of Francis Place: 1771-1854 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), p. 392.

<sup>3</sup>McCord, pp. 75-76, from his study of the Place Papers in the British Museum.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

estimated that audiences of 3,500 to 4,000 stood for a two-hour lecture. On January 16 he reported lecturing for three hours to some 2,000 to 3,000 in the concert hall of the Eastern Institution, Tower Hamlets. By the 17th Paulton concluded he had personally addressed upwards of 10,000 men in the metropolis. Only in the instance of the London Tavern did Paulton admit his meeting had been a failure, but evidence indicated that the extreme London Chartists were relentless in their attacks on League meetings for several months.

Paulton and Smith began their February agitation by systematically calling on the city liberals seeking support for total and immediate repeal. As an indication of their success Smith reported sarcastically that Paulton's efforts had created such an effect that the Tories had actually heard of the agitation.<sup>1</sup> Southwark formed an Anti-Corn Law Association and made lecture appointments for Smith nightly for two weeks. Smith had 1,000 placards printed and asked the League for a "cargo" of pamphlets for the usual after-lecture distribution. After completing this assignment Smith's assessment of the London situation was:

London will cost much money but will be well spent. The people and shopkeepers are all with us. Their zeal is boundless. Success has followed us everywhere

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Sidney Smith to George Wilson, February 4, 1840.

and one lecture has roused a call for others. The feeling<sub>1</sub> is quite healthy but there are no leaders . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Next to the lack of money, it was the problem of leadership which hampered the London efforts. Of the "great ones" in the city Smith complained that "everyone gives the worst possible character of his neighbor . . . then asks what he can do with no assistance?"<sup>2</sup> The shopkeepers and the well-paid artisans were with the League, but Paulton and Smith resolved that all matters of leadership and money must come from Manchester.

As part of the effort to organize the city Paulton and Smith were actively lecturing during February and March. Paulton included St. Pancras, Greenwich, Stafford, Hackney, and Theobalds Road among his eighteen total March lectures. By March 26 the Circular estimated that during fifty lectures given by Smith and Paulton since the beginning of the London campaign, at least five hundred petitions had been signed. By March the Sun, the Morning Chronicle, and the Globe were regularly noticing League lectures.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this publicity Smith reported

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Sidney Smith to George Wilson, February 15, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., February 11, 1840.

<sup>3</sup>A letter from Sidney Smith to George Wilson, April 8, 1840, tells of a David MacKae collecting £4 11s. for taking notes of agricultural labourers and preparing them for press and for preparing paragraphs respecting the proceedings of lecturers for press. It was not clear just

that even the Tories were making plans to pack meetings. At a hall of science lecture some Tory Chartists proposed and had elected their choice of chairman before Smith knew what was going on. Nevertheless, on the first test of strength on the resolution whether Smith should be heard or not, the Chartists lost by a considerable show of hands. The Chartists had been so sure of success that they had had their own shorthand reporter at the meeting to record the triumph of the Tory Chartists over the repealers. In spite of the Chartist influence Smith could report by April 9 that he and Paulton were getting 4,500 signatures for repeal per day.

James Acland's first assignment for the new year was the anti-League, Chartist stronghold of Birmingham. Acland's reaction was:

This is indeed a glorious fight . . . I gain ground nightly. They feel it sorely and grumble audibly. Last night we had nearly a row. It was attempted to put an end to the discussion which is our mainstay--the dropping of water of common sense on the shore of Chartism--and it weals away perceptibly. The attempt was resisted by several Chartists who were grateful for much they were pleased to say they had learned from me . . . I receive threatening letters daily. Of course I heed them not. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Acland also reported that he had put an end to a "side-winded" magisterial effort to end his discussion. It was with the working classes and not the middle classes that

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how much of the London press support was the free response of the papers to the League agitation.

<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to George Wilson, January 17, 1840.

Acland was successful. The Staffordshire Examiner was pleased to note that, "Mr. Acland's quarter of an hour is always sufficient for him to show from the previous speakers own arguments" the absurdity of the Chartists holding out for the unobtainable six points of the Charter, when they could have aided in the agitation for the obtainable goal of the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Examiner concluded that it was Acland's ability to put his points clearly and with force that gained the approval of the more intelligent part of his audience.<sup>1</sup>

Acland began his February agitation with a short tour to Scotland, then was back to Leicester. Evidence indicates he then returned to Manchester and helped with the publication of the Circular for a short time.<sup>2</sup> By February 24 Acland had returned to lecturing. A typical week in his schedule was as follows: Monday evening he lectured and discussed with a pro-Corn Law man in the infant school room, Cuckney. Tuesday afternoon he spoke to the farmers of Heanor in the old chapel for two hours; Tuesday evening he was in Nottingham for a lecture. Wednesday and Thursday were spent in Newark where Acland wrote of his reception:

The audience last night consisted of twenty-five blues (they reckon here by blues and reds)--everyone of whom

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, February 6, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Letters Acland to Wilson, February 7, 1840; Sidney Smith to Wilson, March 6, 1840.

would walk a hundred miles with unboiled peas in their shoes to steal a march on the reds, not one of whom would inconvenience himself to get the corn law repealed.<sup>1</sup>

Acland also admonished the League that they should have waited until after the election in Newark before they made any move in that hostile territory. Thursday night two hundred attended the lecture and Acland gloated that he had got them to be unanimously for the "whole hog." On Friday and Saturday Acland went on to Mansfield.

On March 1 Acland was still in Nottinghamshire. At Longwith and Cuckney he drove two of the Earl of Bathurst's agents into retreat. In the middle of March Acland was at the Adelphi Theatre, Dublin, sharing the platform with Daniel O'Connell and Sharman Crawford; he finished the month at Nottingham, then hurried to London for a new assignment.

Archibald Prentice, editor of the Manchester Times, was not a consistently active League lecturer, but he did make several tours to the farming areas near Manchester in the early months of 1840. In February he overcame the opposition of several Chartists at the town hall, Bolton, to carry the meeting for repeal. In March Prentice and Ballantyne, of the Bolton Free Press, lectured at Gatley, Cheadle, and Edgley. Prentice was a popular speaker with the farmers; his admirers at Cheadle gave a public dinner

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to George Wilson, February 27, 1840.



for him on May 20.

As part of the increased lecture campaign the League hired three new speakers in the beginning months of 1840. The first to be hired was John Joseph Finnigan, a Manchester workingman.<sup>1</sup> Finnigan's primary mission was to deal with the Chartists on their own grounds. As early as December, 1839, the Circular occasionally noted Finnigan's lectures for the Manchester Operative Association. Sometime about the end of February or the beginning of March, 1840, Finnigan was hired by the League. His first reports to the Council listed lectures at Barnstaple, Bideford, Monkeigh, Burrington, and Chulmleigh with the last week of March being planned and paid for by the Torrington Association. After a short illness early in April Finnigan resumed lecturing in the agricultural districts of Didsbury, Northenden, and Wilmslow. Apparently Finnigan met little opposition or, at least, not as much opposition as he wanted for he inserted a challenge in the Western Times and the Woodman's Gazette to any individual to meet him in public discussion of the Corn Laws. A Mr. Mark Kennaway of Exeter was the only challenger and Finnigan reported that the jury of 1,500 Englishmen decided in favor of repeal.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, June 16, 1841, gives the only reference to Finnigan's first names. He was always called J. J. Finnigan.

<sup>2</sup>Letter Finnigan to Ballantyne, April 7, 1840.

John Murray of Liverpool was the second working class lecturer hired in 1840. A trusted Leaguer, Lawrence Heyworth, was asked by Wilson to interview Murray for the position. The following is Heyworth's report:

I have just had a long interview with Murray, whose knowledge of the nature and evil effects produced by the Corn Laws and of the pernicious tendency of all restrictions on Commerce, it cannot be doubted is very extensive and accurately correct--and all I can learn of his private character, I do not find anything to his prejudice except that very recently, he has become a keeper of a beer shop, his previous occupation was a vendor of books in a small way. He is a Chartist of the moral influence class and decidedly on principle and expediency too, opposed to physical force means of obtaining redress for the people's grievances but he still is a Chartist and a meeting of Chartists, I have ascertained, was held at his house last evening. He has no objection to becoming a lecturer. . . . The terms he proposes is £80 per year or £20 per quarter; his expenses for travelling being reimbursed.<sup>1</sup>

Murray was hired and immediately dispatched to Ireland. At Brogheda he lectured to several hundred in the linen hall and formed an association. At Dundalk Murray was able to obtain a room in the hotel for his lecture but the man who owned the right of thoroughfare to the hotel yard threatened the proprietor of the hotel. Thus only a small audience gathered, but on the following evening some six to seven hundred people stood in the market square to hear Murray lecture. The large numbers in the audience were not indicative of the support for the Corn Law repeal. Murray reported that the fear of offending the landowners

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Lawrence Heyworth to George Wilson, April 9, 1840.

or landholders was so great that he had been forced to lecture without a chairman and that no association could be formed. Nevertheless, Murray flooded every workshop in town with the tracts, "Facts for Farmers" and "Wages in Poland."

Murray's first financial statement reflected much the same kinds of expenses as the other lecturers had encountered except he was not so careful to itemize each expense. A sample of his first lecture expenses can be seen in the following financial accounting submitted April 18, 1840:<sup>1</sup>

	£	s.	d.
Portage Liverpool		1	0
Passage Steward & Refreshments		18	0
Boat Hire		1	0
Bellman, Placards & posting at Drogheda		16	0
Coach fare and portage Newry and back		7 7	6 0
Bellman, placards and posting at Dundalk		18	6
Personal Expenses (9 days)	1	16	8
	£5	5	8

In April, 1840, there was a division and weakening of the radical support for Corn Law repeal. Again

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<sup>1</sup>Letter in League Letter Book.

Villiers moved his resolution for repeal and again, in spite of the presentation of a more moderate resolution than that of the previous year, he was defeated three hundred to one hundred seventy-seven votes. This parliamentary setback immediately set off radical demands for further reforms. The Leeds radicals organized to seek household suffrage, redistribution of seats, and shorter Parliaments. So anxious were Marshall and Stansfield, the Leeds leaders, to gain their ends, they accepted the support of such men as Hetherington and Cleave who had most recently been employed in breaking up all the anti-Corn Law meetings they could find.<sup>1</sup> The result of the Leeds' exertions was the formation of the Leeds Household Suffrage Association which in spite of much effort was never effective and finally dwindled away. The main effect of this agitation was to divide and segment the concentration of radical energies; this failure of the radicals to concentrate on one reform at a time had long been their chief weakness. Because of the alliance of the Leeds men with the physical force Chartists, many of the moderate radicals continued to support the League. Nevertheless, Cobden reported that much energy and money was lost to the League because of the Leeds move.<sup>2</sup>

By late April or early May, 1840, the London

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

agitation was in the first stages of failure. The Metropolitan Association put on a brave front. On May 7, 1840, the Circular published a report of its progress from February to April; 696 petitions received 200,268 signatures. Paulton had delivered twenty-eight lectures, Sidney Smith, forty-five, and Greig, eleven. Approximately 2,000 working class men were enrolled in the Association at one shilling a year. By June 125 lectures had been given, 215,000 tracts distributed, and 726 petitions signed in London.

On May 1, 1840, Sidney Smith wrote to Manchester that London had absolutely no money. Chapman, the Metropolitan Association's secretary, and Smith went canvassing, but were unsuccessful. Chapman was dismissed because no one could afford his salary of £8 7s. per week. Some of the League's difficulties in London came from the conflict between the London radicals and the League's Manchester leadership. In February with the founding of the Metropolitan Association the London radicals expected not only to take over the leadership of the London association but also that of the entire anti-Corn Law movement. By May and June the Londoners proved that they could not even run their own association successfully. The League closed most of the London operations although Sidney Smith as late as June was still using the city as a base for his lecturing tours. Toward the end of June

Smith received instructions to follow Justins, the Bread-Tax lecturer, into Dorset and Devonshire.

Paulton left London in early May for a lecturing tour in York and Newcastle. At York he reported great difficulty in getting a place to lecture. Finally he obtained the use of the merchants hall but not until the struggle to get permission to use the hall from the deputy governor and wardens had created much favorable publicity for the League. Paulton continued to Newcastle where he became very ill. On June 15 he reported he had been doing some of the small friendly towns until he was completely well, but his efforts were curtailed for some time and by the end of June he was back in Manchester recuperating.

Another of the lecturers hired during the spring of 1840 was Walter Griffith, a native of and lecturer for Wales. His first weeks were spent in translating the League's tracts into Welsh; then Griffith's permanent assignment was to travel and lecture in Wales. Relatively little is known of Griffith's methods as there were only a few letters from him in the League Letter Book and fewer notices of his activities in the Circular. Late in May, 1840, Griffith explained to Wilson the difficulty in getting up meetings of a district unless two weeks notice was given. For example, Griffith apparently could not obtain the services of the bellman at one of his stops and had such a small audience he moved the people next door to the

Dissenting Chapel. The welcome which Griffith received from the Welsh religious community greatly aided his work. In most towns the independent chapels were freely granted for his lectures; at times ministers announced Griffith's lectures from the pulpit and congregations made the cause a subject of public prayer.<sup>1</sup> Griffith's first lectures at Rhosllanerchrugog, Llangollen, Mold, Holywell, and Canarvon were well received.

John Murray was continuing his efforts in Ireland during May. He had received instructions to lecture, to obtain signatures for petitions, to gather observations on the state of the farmers and laborers, and to substitute the word "national" for "Manchester." From Newry Murray reported that since he could not obtain a room for his lecture he would speak in the streets. By the end of the month continued wet weather forced Murray to abandon his usual out-of-doors lectures and hire a hall at Lisburn and Banbridge.

In spite of the support of Sharman Crawford, Murray encountered considerable opposition in Ireland. A universal fear of the landlords often prevented the formation of an anti-Corn Law association. A writer in the Ulster Times recommended that Murray be hooted from all well organized districts. In Belfast the general reception was favorable with the exception of one small Tory

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, June 4, 1840.

interruption; the presence of Sharman Crawford on the platform did much to stifle dissension. Murray got up one morning in Antrium to find all his bills either pulled down or defaced so as not to be legible. He described that evening's lecture:

At twenty minutes past seven several of the police walked towards the market house and took up their stations. At the moment advertised, I got a man, a stranger to the matter (those who knew were afraid), to carry a table and chair to the place. There were not more than eight or ten persons there, but groups of from three to six persons together stood in the distance. I commenced by distributing tracts, and as soon as the number amounted to about thirty, I commenced and it very soon increased to a large number. I brought no papers, no statistical matter, but appealed to their own memory and experience of farming labour, and how their state had gone from bad to worse. I was listened to with utmost attention and no authority interfered with me.<sup>1</sup>

Murray concluded his June lecturing at Coleraine and at the small coastal towns of Port Stewart, Port Rush, and Port Ballintra, where he was well received.

While other lecturers had been recalled to Manchester in July Murray was allowed to continue in Ireland. At Londonderry he had just finished quieting a small disturbance when several policemen appeared and informed Murray that they had the mayor's orders to arrest him if he did not stop lecturing instantly. Murray stopped at once and took his audience over to Mehan's racket court, where he finished his lecture from the balcony with part of the people able to get on the court and the other part

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, July 2, 1840.



out in the street. At Enniskillen the provost and the sub-sheriff took turns listening to Murray's lecture to detect any violations of the law. The Sligo Journal proudly declared that Murray had been silenced at Cord and Derry; the available facts indicated this was more a wish than a reality. Murray proceeded to Dublin and then on to Manchester.

Toward the end of May, Murray was told that Finnigan was to be sent to Ireland. To help Finnigan in his first attempts Murray outlined the following as his method of agitation:

First on arriving at any town with pockets full of tracts visit the smiths forge, the joiners, tailors, shoemakers, saddlers and nailors shops give them tracts invite them to the lecture ask them who are the greatest enemies of the large loaf in the neighborhood tell them when they come not to pin their faith on his sleeve but listen quietly as rational men and if any opponent should come to give him fair play and let the assembled people be the judges. This course I have followed . . . they have been my friends everywhere and I have universally received their thanks at parting.<sup>1</sup>

Finnigan arrived in his native city of Dublin to begin his campaign. The Dublin situation was not what Finnigan might have expected. The Anti-Corn Law Association was so badly in debt Finnigan had to ask the League for £50 to rent the Adelphi Theatre. His first lecture at the theatre on May 25 was reported by the Circular to include graphic allusions to the melancholy conditions to

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Murray to George Wilson, May 22, 1840.

which the artisans of Dublin had been reduced. A lack of large manufacturing support--most of the small artisans were under the influence of the landowners--hampered the Dublin effort. In June Finnigan wrote that it would produce considerable effect if Murray could stop by Dublin and lecture on his way from the North.

Finnigan moved on to Cork in July where he and the mayor spent most of the month in verbal combat. At the beginning of the first lecture the mayor was not to be seen, but a guard of police were at the door and three policemen were stationed around the platform. By eight o'clock with some two thousand in attendance the lecture was going well when the mayor arrived, took up a position to the side of the platform, and accosted Finnigan. A brief verbal exchange established that the mayor found the meeting illegal because of a paragraph on the placard announcing the lecture. Finnigan proceeded to read the offending paragraph to the crowd. When he reached the sentences, "Irishmen, look around you! What do you behold? A starving population and absentee landlords rioting in luxurious profusion by means of enormous rents, . . ." the crowd shouted, "Down with the Corn Laws" and "Go on with your lecture." Finally Finnigan obtained enough quiet for the mayor to speak, but the crowd soon began to shout him down. The mayor then became angry and warned the crowd he would use force to stop this young man

if it was necessary. The audience ultimately compromised with the mayor, promising to go home if the mayor would let Finnigan go free. On July 14 Finnigan was able to complete a lecture at the temperance room and an Anti-Corn Law Association was formed in Cork.

James Acland spent April through July, 1840, agitating in Norfolk and Suffolk. In a long Good Friday letter, Acland outlined the difficulties he encountered:

It is very hard work to talk the Norwich [folk] into a disposition to inquire concerning the operation of the Corn Law, but we are by slow degrees succeeding in the effort. There must have been from two to three hundred farmers at the discussion in St. Andrews Hall and I brought them to perceive that the question was at least worth their consideration. I think we have made it an open question with those who have hitherto viewed our agitation as a factious attempt to persuade our class interests by means of quackery.

Norfolk and Suffolk are to be won by laborious perseverance and not otherwise. I am obliged to make it almost exclusively an agricultural question.<sup>1</sup>

For two weeks Acland lectured nightly. Associations were formed at Yarmouth and at Bury, both of which Acland considered of utmost importance because of their position as centers of trade for the agricultural district.

The Corn Law party in Norwich found a champion in a Mr. Bell, the editor of the Farmers Journal and former Chartist orator. Bell had escaped the notice of the League until he entered Acland's territory at Norwich in the beginning of April. Acland promptly challenged Bell to a full discussion on Saturday, April 11, 1840.

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<sup>1</sup>In League Letter Book.

Although some one thousand farmers gathered at St. Andrew's Hall for the discussion neither party advanced anything beyond that already disclosed in their former lectures, making the whole affair rather anti-climactic. Acland had gained more ground in a series of lectures at the Angel Inn. At Lym in the middle of Acland's lecture a Tory gentleman rose up and called out, "Lads, I'll give a pint of ale to every man who will follow me," then left the room. Acland responded, "All who stop shall have a full allowance of common sense." Not one person left.<sup>1</sup> In the rotten borough of Thetford Acland's lecture was met by whistling and hooting by some twenty gentlemen farmers in the grand jury box of the town hall. Acland offered to discuss with any one they should appoint as a spokesman, but no one would respond. Finally after vowing to stand there all night, if necessary, until he was heard, Acland was able to lecture for two hours and obtain a good hearing. The Bury Post was so excited about Acland's lectures it devoted a fourth of a single issue to a lecture report. Acland considered Bury and Ipswich among his most important victories for they were the focus of Tory Corn Lawism in the country.

Early in June a pamphlet entitled "A Merchant," which proposed to expose the repeal fallacies was published in Eye, Suffolk. Acland rushed in to give three

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to George Wilson, April 28, 1840.

lectures at Eye, but could not draw the author out. At Woodbridge Acland reported he had been assaulted and thrown over the bannister of the Bull Inn by a gang of twenty ruffian farmers in the garb of gentlemen. "It was these places," Acland told Wilson, "that most need lecturing."<sup>1</sup> Under this definition Saxmundham badly needed lecturing. Acland began his first lecture to the accompaniment of loud hooting and yelling. Several verbal exchanges took place between Acland's friends, who had stationed themselves about the platform, and the hooters. The rebels tried to overturn the barrel Acland was standing on and the fight began. Acland explained:

my body was then battled for by the two parties--we having more men but more of beef and mutton in them. This lasted a quarter of an hour. Some blood was wasted and at last the sixty policemen . . . rescued me.<sup>2</sup>

Acland was taken to the barracks of the rural police, then to the Bell Inn, was placed in a gig, and was escorted out of town. Acland reported to Wilson that he was not much worse in body and better in mind provided the League did not disapprove of his actions. On hearing that the League thought of hauling his attackers into court Acland requested, "pray put legal proceedings out of the question until I get my head broke. We must win by moral force."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to George Wilson, May 6, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>May 8, 1840.

<sup>3</sup>May 17, 1840.

Immediately Acland began to plot his return to Saxmundham. He approached the district cautiously, spending several days distributing tracts and building the numbers of his friends before he again entered the town. When the day arrived for his lecture Acland decided to speak from the market place. He warned Wilson that if anything happened to him or he was taken into custody that a blank letter would be posted to the Council. The place Acland had chosen to lecture from was occupied by a herd of sheep apparently brought to the market for the express purpose of obstructing him. A temporary hustings was then erected in a new spot in the market. Several hundred farmers armed with short sticks crowded around Acland. Half a dozen police took up stations surrounding the hustings, another fifty marched military style into the crowd, and as Acland began still another body of police marched in and took up positions two deep in a circle keeping an open space between the hustings and the crowd. Acland had finished most of his lecture when a stone was thrown from somewhere in the crowd striking his hat. He observed, "I don't mind such trifles as that," and went on to finish his lecture. Acland gave one more lecture at Saxmundham without incident before he moved on to Debenham where he spoke from the window of the Crown Inn in spite of some interruptions from Tory farmers. At Halesworth only one constable stood between Acland and an

assailant who was attempting to drag Acland off the hustings. The constable prevailed and the show of hands for repeal was unanimous.

The squires of Suffolk appealed to the Home Secretary for assistance in stopping Acland, but their request was denied. The squires of Clare, despairing of orthodox means of stopping Acland, resorted to commandeering the parish fire engine under the direction of the local churchwardens. Acland was drenched to the skin but he stood on his chair, his arms folded, and refused to move. Next the squires marched in the parish band but Acland stood his ground and the people with him. At last Acland concluded his lecture and the people expressed their thanks to the exhausted lecturer by escorting him with all due honor to his lodgings.

In July, 1840, Acland visited Ipswich again; he lectured from a chair under the portico of the Corn Market in heavy rain for nearly two hours. Toward the end of July the Council sent Acland to a great agricultural exhibition at Cambridge. His instructions were very specific. If the Agricultural Society made any attempt to propagandize in behalf of the Corn Laws, Acland was to immediately begin a series of lectures. Since the landowners chose to raise no issues Acland continued home to Manchester. He made a few short lecturing tours in August to Macclesfield, Knutsford, and Batley.

The second lecture campaign was unsuccessful. Much information was given to farmers, operatives, and other working men but there was little increase in middle class support. Several lecturers--Acland and Murray especially --had been manhandled. Paulton became too ill to continue. Finnigan had not been able to rouse Buckinghamshire so had been transferred to Ireland, where the League was not happy about his results. The Council was again badly in debt by June and July of 1840; local associations could not or would not finance the lecture tours. For want of money the second lecture campaign was concluded in the summer of 1840.

The Beginning of the Electoral Campaign:  
September, 1840 - August, 1842

The failure of the second lecture campaign forced the League to reappraise completely its goals and methods. From the founding of the Manchester Association in 1838 there had been two distinct points of view among the Leaguers as to the best method of exerting sufficient pressure on Parliament to obtain the repeal of the Corn Laws. R. H. Greg, the Member for Manchester, and J. B. Smith, the President of the League, were the leaders of one group. They wanted the League to steer clear of political manipulations and to confine its activities to attempts to educate public opinion through the use of a newspaper, of petitions, of lecturing tours, and of large



rallies and conferences. This policy had been tried for two years with few positive results. From the beginning of the agitation Richard Cobden had urged that the propaganda campaign be directed more specifically to the electors. When J. B. Smith was optimistic about being heard at the bar of the House, Cobden wrote:

You will perhaps smile at my venturing thus summarily to set aside all your present formidable demonstrations as useless; but I found my conviction on the present construction of the House of Commons, which forbids us hoping for success. That the House must be changed before we can get justice. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The success of the parliamentary reform groups in 1840 only supported Cobden's thesis that repeal was impossible unless the composition of Parliament could be changed.

During the summer of 1840 a new agitation policy was formulated by the Council of the League. Cobden outlined this plan to Place:

We have determined upon a plan for influencing the electoral bodies. As soon as registries are revised by the barristers, we shall obtain copies of them in all burroughs in which we intend to operate. We shall then send circulars, calling a meeting of the voters to meet a Deputation of the League to confer with them upon the question of the corn law--we shall separate the question entirely from party politics and induce as many electors as possible to associate themselves together to form a body pledged only to the abolition of the corn law. . . .<sup>2</sup>

In accordance with the new electoral plan the League's lecturers received more specific assignments for

<sup>1</sup>Letter Cobden to J. B. Smith, undated, in Smith Corn Law Papers.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 83.

the fall of 1840. Sidney Smith was sent to Liverpool in August, where for two months he lectured nightly. At first in the Preston-Street lecture he had a short scuffle with the Chartists, but by the middle of September he was forming workingmen's associations. He gave a successful course of lectures to such diverse audiences as the Protector's Society, the Catholic Electors, the Skilled Mechanics, the Society of Friends, and at the Independent Chapel.

In late September Acland was sent to survey the electoral situation in Stourbridge, Kidderminster, and the surrounding area. He decided that Stourbridge and Wenlock would make good electoral pivots. After four lectures at Stourbridge Acland went on to Kidderminster which he reported was "dead against" the League. Acland described his third lecture:

The triumphant issue of my first two lectures here --in the establishment of an Association so galled the Tories that they determined on re-enacting the Paulton scene last night. To this end a knot of Tory bullies were stuffed and swilled all day at a low public house and on the opening of the doors this party headed by a Tory Counsellor, took forcible possession of the reserved space for the friends of the cause.

Precisely as the Mayor took the chair--Boycott their spokesman, told the people as long as I addressed them to the point of the Corn Laws [they would allow me to speak]. He expressed his determination and that of his friends not to allow me to speak upon any other subject. . . .

On my commencing with the argument that the effect of the Corn Law had been most prejudiced to our manufacturing and commercial interests, my sapient opponents declared that the question had nothing to do with the question of the Corn Law--whereupon the clique at his back opened their war hoops and

persisted in making so much noise as to prevent my being heard--and the Mayor broke up the meeting from sheer timidity lest the peace should be broken at the close of his year of office.

He was addressing the meeting on the culpable indisposition to hear me when I demanded a show of hands for and against inquiry. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Acland won the show of hands then announced he would finish the lecture the next day. After one more lecture at Kidderminster, Acland finished the month at Bridgnorth, Worcester, and Wenlock.

The League decided against further efforts in Kidderminster, recalled Acland early in October, and reassigned him to Sheffield. Acland's specific assignment was to get the influential and wealthy men of Sheffield, the broadcloth, to contribute financially to the League campaign. After flooding the town with newspaper advertisements and placards Acland began a nightly series of lectures in the town hall. His first difficulty was in getting the influential men out to a meeting. The Master Cutler consented to take the chair at the first lecture; the town hall was crowded but Acland noted a conspicuous absence of broadcloth. Both a social missionary and a school teacher took Acland on in discussion. After this first lecture Acland was able to diagnose the League's weakness in Sheffield as the fear of Chartist denunciation; therefore, he resolved to take the Chartist "bull by

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to League, September, 1840.

the horns."<sup>1</sup>

The second Sheffield lecture ended with a two hour discussion of which Acland was pleased to say he had the best part.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Leader, the editor of the Sheffield Independent, found three columns for a favorable report of Acland's lectures. By October 15 Acland could report that three nights had gone well; the broadcloth seemed pleased at the drubbings he was administering to the Chartists. Despairing of getting the wealthy out in great numbers to the lectures, Acland decided to call a special Monday meeting of the gentlemen who were "very backward in coming forward" to appeal to their liberality. Even the Monday meeting was not a complete success for Acland reported a dearth of the "right sort." Nevertheless, the gentlemen's meeting decided that three of them would wait on Dr. Holland, the local Corn Law champion, with a proposition from Acland that each name a referee, then an umpire, and that those three meet with Holland and Acland to agree on terms for a Discussion. The three named men accompanied Acland to the square where he was to lecture. After a chairman was elected a Chartist leader named Beale informed the chairman that he had a letter from Dr. Holland which outlined plans for Holland to meet Acland in discussion at the Sheffield Theatre. Acland had the meeting confirm his

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to League, October 13, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., October 14, 1840.

committee of three representatives, then he declined to lecture again until he met Holland.

Acland elated over having finally drawn out the Doctor, was sure that when he defeated Holland, Sheffield could be added to the League's strongest supporters. Acland's confidence in victory did not prevent him from preparing carefully. For a week his letters to the League asked for the latest returns of exports and imports, for the Quarterly Review article on Carlyle's work, for the report of the evidence given before the Committee on Import Duties, and for a copy of the complete file of correspondence on the Doncaster Discussion.

The history of the League's efforts to pressure Holland into a face-to-face confrontation began back in August, 1840. The Circular of August 13 told of Acland's efforts for the past three weeks to effect a Doncaster Discussion with Dr. Holland of Sheffield. Sometime in August the two parties agreed to nine proposition to be discussed for an hour and a half each. By September Edmond Denison, Holland's referee, made several proposals to George Wilson, Acland's representative. Denison wanted the theatre roped off with half reserved for Holland's friends and half for Acland's. Wilson demurred stating that such divisions were more likely to elicit strong displays of feeling rather than to secure the undivided attention of the audience. In a long wrangle over this and

other provisions Denison resigned as Holland's referee. Wilson wrote on September 9 directly to Holland hoping to conclude negotiations. Finally about October 20 complete arrangements were agreed upon.

The Sheffield Discussion began on a Tuesday evening. The theatre was crowded; on the stage with its carpeted floor, elegant tables, and chairs were seated John Sykes Esq., the umpire; T. A. Ward Esq., Town Regent, Acland's referee; and Thomas Blake Esq., Holland's referee, plus several other gentlemen. At the appointed time, the umpire rose, reminded the audience that as expressions of approval or disapproval would naturally interfere with the time of the speakers they should abstain from any such expressions. He then read the first proposition, "that the Corn Law is a violation of the natural and inherent right of man 'to live by the sweat of his brow,'" and called on Acland. Acland carefully outlined the philosophical right of men to food. Holland replied that the increase in the productive powers of Britain had more than kept pace with her population growth. Acland in his five minute refutation asked what Holland had said about the right of man to eat then went on to add more evidence to his proposition. The discussion continued in this manner through the propositions:

2. That the Corn Law is a blasphemous interference with the decrees and dispensations of Division Providence.

3. That the Corn Law annually sacrifices its thousands of human victims to the Juggernaut of a heartless aristocracy.

On Wednesday:

4. That the Corn Law is a pauper-relieving enactment to the beggared landowner and a pauper-creating enactment to the children of industry.
5. That the Corn Law had materially affected and threatened speedily to destroy our commercial and manufacturing pre-eminence.

On Thursday:

6. That the Corn Law has not been a protection to the agriculturist.
8. (7 and 9 were withdrawn to give more time to 8) That the repeal of the Corn Laws would confer immediate benefit on the majority of our population, (by enhancing the wages of labour, and increasing the supply of good) and conduce to the great and permanent prosperity of our commercial and manufacturing and agricultural interests.<sup>1</sup>

The format for each proposition was the same. Acland began with a speech upholding the proposition, Holland followed with a lengthy refutation, and Acland had a five minute rebuttal. Although by prearrangement no show of hands was taken at the end of the discussion the newspapers reporting the event voted overwhelmingly in favor of a victory for Acland. Also the subsequent change of heart on the part of the broadcloth of Sheffield to become active in repeal indicated an Acland victory.

On October 29, 1840, some one thousand ladies and gentlemen gathered in the Corn Exchange, Manchester, to

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, November 5, 1840.

publicize the repeal agitation. The room was decorated with numerous banners and flags with various Biblical injunctions such as, "Oppression drives a wise man mad," and "The bread of the needy is his life." Three loaves--the English, French, and Polish one shilling loaves--were suspended from the ceiling. The Polish loaf was about twice the size of the French loaf which again was about twice as large as the English loaf. A concert band played popular tunes. J. B. Smith proposed the Queen, Brotherton the House of Lords, and Smith proposed Villiers and the House of Commons. R. H. Greg, M. P., responded with a short speech for the absent Villiers. Bright proposed the League and Cobden responded. Sir Thomas Potter, Mark Phillips, J. C. Dyer, and Lawrence Heyworth were also called upon. After three cheers were given to the chairman the meeting separated.

The League decided that Murray should make another attempt in Cork. He gave two complete lectures in safety without the interference of the mayor. At Youghall Murray reported his placards were defaced by the police. The billsticker told Murray that the mayor took a part of the bills from him, kept them for half an hour, and then sent them back. The mayor did not arrive at the lecture until it was over and the audience was giving three cheers for repeal.

Murray began his October agitation at Kinsale where



a large group of respectable electors volunteered their services for an association. At Bandon the printer used various excuses to keep Murray waiting for his bills until it was too late to catch the mail conveyance either the twenty miles to Cork or the eighteen to Kinsale. The bellman was also prevented from assisting Murray who then walked to Kinsale, had the placards struck off, returned, and had them posted by morning to the dismay of his enemies. Some four hundred working men showed up for the lecture so shortly convened. At Mallow Murray was unable to find a room; he became ill and went to Cork for a few days to recover. When he returned to Mallow he got in touch with a Mr. Williams, a liberal, wealthy pawnbroker and spirit dealer, who promised to help. Williams attempted to get the court house but could not. Finally Murray obtained a large room which was used for storing hay. When Murray wanted to lecture he had the hay removed; after he was through he had the hay replaced. Murray became too ill to lecture and he went to Cork for the remainder of October to recover.

On regaining his health Murray was off to Limerick on November 6. He hired the northumberland rooms and issued placards for lectures on Monday and Tuesday, the ninth and tenth of November. Murray had begun his first lecture when the mayor and three city magistrates appeared and said they had information that a riot was imminent.

Simultaneously Murray continued to lecture, the mayor read the riot act, and the magistrates forcibly drove the people out of the room. Murray challenged the mayor to arrest him but apparently the magistrates were not prepared for this step so they took their seats, leaving about twelve policemen standing and Murray continued to lecture. Finally the magistrates cleared the room of everyone; Murray occupied the platform until nine o'clock and then left. On the 10th some two to three hundred people gained admission before the police arrived to present a barrier of musket muzzles to those who came afterwards. Shortly after Murray began speaking the mayor, one of the magistrates from the previous evening, and the Irish patriot Thomas Steele arrived. While Steele asked the people to leave, Vokes with his shillalah helped the police clear the room. Murray's notebook was taken from him and Murray ejected from the room.

On hearing of Murray's difficulties, the League Council acted immediately and vigorously. The following letter was sent to Murray to be inserted in such newspapers as he thought necessary:

National Anti-Corn Law League  
Manchester November 17, 1840

The Council of the National Anti-Corn Law League having observed that Mr. John Murray has been obstructed whilst delivering lectures against the bread tax in Limerick, hereby give notice that Mr. John Murray is one of their authorized lecturers, that they have the greatest confidence in his ability and

discretion, and that they will protect him from illegal interference on the part of any person or persons during his progress through Ireland.

Signed  
By Order of the Council  
George Wilson, Chairman

Acland was recalled to Manchester, briefed, and dispatched to Ireland to assist Murray. Acland called at the Castle at Dublin to see the Irish Secretary and was satisfied that Lord Morpeth would institute a "prompt and searching inquiry."<sup>1</sup> Acland arrived to find Murray under interdict not to lecture in Limerick but copies of the despositions which magistrates had acted upon were not available. When Steele heard from Acland that Murray was not a Chartist of the physical force school Steele used his influence to have a public meeting called to condemn the entire obstruction proceedings. Steele and Acland both sent letters to the Limerick Reporter which had supported Murray throughout the entire affair. Murray and Acland obtained the northumberland rooms and scheduled a third and fourth lecture. Thomas Steele chaired the third meeting; Acland spoke briefly explaining the League's support of Murray, then Murray delivered his first full lecture to an audience in Limerick. At the fourth lecture a Mr. M'Grath threw the weight of the Congregated Trades Council of Limerick behind Murray's right to free discussion. In

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, November 19, 1840.

summing up the situation Acland reported to Wilson:

You will see that I have elected to play second to Murray and to do nothing myself unless it should become necessary. He is entitled to this at our hand for he has acted well--very well--throughout the entire proceedings and finding that he is properly appreciated and honourable supported, he will be worth much more to the League in his after efforts.<sup>1</sup>

After the fourth lecture Acland saw no further need of his services and he started back to Manchester. Murray, "an object of curiosity and solicitude," continued his tour of southern Ireland with much success.<sup>2</sup>

Acland returned to Sheffield to finish his campaign there. Profits of £27 on the Discussion were sent to the League. At last on November 4, Acland reported the accomplishment of his Sheffield goal. At a coffee and crumpets "converzation" at Acland's lodgings the broadcloth of Sheffield resolved that £100 ought to be raised, that they would exert themselves to procure it, and that a meeting was to be held to reorganize the broadcloth association to commence an immediate canvass for cash. Acland gave his farewell lecture at Sheffield, November 6 to an overflow audience in the town hall.

Sidney Smith was recalled from Liverpool late in October, 1840, and sent to agitate Wiltshire. Although the population of Wiltshire was only 240,000, it returned fourteen borough and four county Members. Smith began his

<sup>1</sup>October, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, December 3, 1840.

agitation at Westbury; he could not obtain the town hall because the public had so seriously damaged it in their demonstration against Mr. Justins, the Corn Law advocate. First he addressed a select group of electors at the Angel Inn, then a larger meeting at Mr. Matraver's factory on October 22; both meetings showed much support for repeal. Accompanied by three influential electors from Devizes, Smith lectured at Calne on November 6. In spite of the interruption when a drunken farmer threw a squib into the hall the lecture was well received. At Bronham Smith lashed out at the landowners and clergy who had endeavored to delude the poor that dear bread was advantageous to the laborer. The Wiltshire Independent, a valued repeal supporter, printed lengthy reports of all Smith's lectures. At Chippenham Smith was welcomed on the road by several persons who had the week before walked ten miles to Devizes to hear him. He met little resistance in Wiltshire; a few mayors refused the use of their town hall, but the obstructionists only increased the desire to hear Smith.

In December, 1840, the League's lecturers were scattered throughout England, Ireland, and Wales. Acland lectured and discussed at Northampton, Coventry, Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester where the Leicestershire Mercury was impressed with Acland's skill and success in meeting all opponents. Paulton was well received at Bolton, Bath,

and Bristol. Griffith was visiting the lower part of Glamorganshire to obtain petition signatures and to deliver tracts. Murray was discussing the merits of repeal with Catholic clergymen in Galway. Smith continued in Wiltshire.

A part of the new electoral agitation campaign included the holding of borough or county meetings to be visited by deputations from the League. The first of these meetings was held in the town hall, Bolton. John Brooks, J. B. Smith, Cobden, and Edward Hall met with the electors to urge that Bolton elect a free trader as their representative. The Leaguers met in Newall's Buildings, Manchester in November to hear Cobden and Sharman Crawford. Nearly two thousand electors attended a meeting at the Lion Hotel, Warrington where William Rawson, John Brooks, and Lawrence Heyworth argued the case for repeal; the meeting concluded by pledging to support an anti-Corn Law candidate at the next election. At Macclesfield on December 21 Cobden, Brooks, Evans, and Rawson renewed their appeal to the electors to influence the next borough elections; Thomas Falvey, a working man, made an effective appeal against the Bread Tax.

The change in the direction of the League's agitation to the electors was not clearly seen until the decision in January, 1841, to fight a by-election in Walsall. There was much discussion and soul searching among members

of the League Council before the decision was taken. The seat at Walsall was originally held by Finch, a free trader, but the Whigs had decided to bring out as the Liberal candidate, Lyttleton, a young cornet of the Guards, who could in no way be classed as a free trader. This affront was too much for Cobden who immediately urged the Council to bring forward their own candidate. Moderate Leaguers vigorously opposed interference. The Manchester Guardian and the Morning Chronicle, who called the League narrow-minded bigots, led the press attack against interference.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Cobden had many supporters on the Council; John Bright came over from Rochdale especially to support the proposed action at Walsall. Bright described the January 5 Council meeting where the final decision was taken:

I was present last evening at a meeting of the Council when there was exhibited on the part of the Whigs and the Guardian people a disposition to censure the course pursued by the Council--but we put an extinguisher on their growling and brought all to agree to a resolution that the affair must be carried through with spirit . . . the milk and water people are rather frightened. . . .<sup>2</sup>

A special fund was set up--Cobden gave £100, Sturge £200--and the League began its first election fight for free trade.

William Rawson, Archibald Prentice, and James

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>In Smith Corn Law Papers.

Acland were deputed by the Council to proceed to Walsall to put a pledge of total repeal to both candidates. They arrived just as Lyttleton was addressing the electors. Prentice thought his speech "that of a very young man who had been schooled to utter a few common-places, of a seemingly liberal tone, without a single definite declaration of principle."<sup>1</sup> After Lyttleton finished Acland whispered to him that a deputation from the League was there and that they would not press for an answer then, but they wished to know his opinions as to the total repeal of the Corn Laws. Mr. Bolton, the law agent for the Whigs, loudly asked the audience if the League would not prefer Lyttleton who was a Liberal and friendly to the revision of the Corn Laws to the Tory candidate, Gladstone, who supported protection. At the challenge from Lyttleton's own agent, Acland, Prentice, and finally Rawson explained the League's position on total repeal and their desire to support or bring forth a candidate of their own to support that view. A canvass of the electors the next morning indicated that the Corn Law repealers were of sufficient strength to dictate their terms to the Liberal candidate. A placard was printed announcing a lecture that evening by Acland. Gladstone sent word he would rather not enter into a discussion of the Corn Laws; Lyttleton said he would vote for total repeal when he

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 176.



ascertained the interests of the country required it, but in view of the wishes of the electors he would retire from the contest to leave the field open for a repealer. The electors of Walsall chose a Mr. Foster, but his father, a conservative, forbade him to stand. Prentice hurried back to Manchester to confer with the Council who decided to send J. B. Smith to Walsall to find a candidate. Eventually Smith himself stood because he could find no local candidate likely to be successful. The League then virtually moved to Walsall for the period of the election.<sup>1</sup>

The exact contributions of the lecturers to the Walsall contest are not known beyond the announcement in the Circular that:

lectures will be delivered every evening in different parts of the town, and from the varied talents of the speakers, the people of Walsall will be both entertained and instructed.<sup>2</sup>

Acland was in Walsall from the beginning of the campaign; Sidney Smith came after J. B. Smith decided to run; Murray was sent over by the Liverpool Association.

The League entered energetically into a contest which excited national attention. The repealers were aided considerably by the economic structure of the constituency.<sup>3</sup> The Birmingham merchants, many of whom were

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>January 14, 1841.

<sup>3</sup>McCord, pp. 86-87.

keen free traders, had a monopoly on merchandizing the Walsall saddler's ironmongery. A deputation of important merchants from Birmingham appeared in Walsall in support of Smith and the League published and circulated lists of these men. Both sides used bottling, bribery, voting dead men, impersonation of voters, and other methods common to the politics of 1841. At the close of the poll on January 30 the results were: Gladstone three hundred sixty-three and Smith three hundred thirty-six. Although the election ended in defeat for Smith, the seat was made safe for a free trader in the next contest. The results forced both political parties to reckon with the League; calculations of electoral strength had to include both free trade support or the lack of it.<sup>1</sup> Even the Morning Chronicle admitted that the Corn Laws would henceforth be a hustings question. And the Farmer's Journal was afraid that the League was a force to be reckoned with.<sup>2</sup>

For some reason Paulton did not participate in the Walsall election, but spent the month lecturing to the electors of Bristol. He experienced some difficulty both in getting a place and in putting down the Chartists, but he was finally able to form an association. Also absent from Walsall was Finnigan who gave a complete course of lectures during January at Huddersfield.

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

On February 18, 1841, the League met in business session to take account of past activities and to plan for the future. George Wilson reviewed the League's accomplishments for 1840 and for January, 1841. About eight hundred lectures had been delivered in thirty-four counties in England, plus some forty to fifty places in Scotland, twenty to thirty in Ireland, and thirty-two in Wales; in Lancashire lectures had been delivered in every town. Some 1,241,000 handbills had been distributed by the lecturers mainly in the agricultural districts. In the same year the League had printed 173,000 copies of the Circular, 20,000 of the Anti-Corn Law Almanack, and nearly a million anti-Bread Tax adhesive wafers. Acland spoke briefly on the necessity of the lecturers arguing total repeal if they were to be successful. The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman, J. B. Smith.

There are few reports available of lecturing activity during February. Paulton applied for and received permission to use the town hall at Dorchester before the mayor was told by the Tory Dorchester Chronicle that Paulton would advocate the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Tories imported a Weymouth agitator to break up Paulton's lecture but the audience threw the troublemaker out bodily. Sidney Smith began a one-man campaign with an address to the electors of East Surrey; he continued to Reading and Peckham Hall.

Paulton was facing stiff opposition in March, 1841. After exhausting all possibilities for the hire of a room in Weymouth, Paulton obtained the use of the large room of the Crown Hotel by guaranteeing to make good for any damages. A placard headed, "Give us this day our daily bread," followed by the whole of the church liturgy praying that "dearth and scarcity" would be converted into "cheapness and plenty" was posted in the town. On the night of the lecture some three hundred tradesmen and voters assembled. A Mr. Dairs, a wine merchant, attempted a refutation but was laughed off the stage. The following evening a number of quarry men from Portland were imported to stop Paulton. Dairs again appeared but again gave such a poor performance that Paulton took pity on him, framed his ramblings into three propositions which Paulton then proceeded to defeat. Maddened by this second failure the quarry men, in a body, began to move from the bottom to the top of the room where Paulton stood. Chairs, benches, windows, and all were broken on their way. Paulton maintained his position until the table he was standing on was knocked out from under him; the landlord and the police rescued him, then cleared the room. Paulton consoled himself in his failure that the incident had at least excited much more public discussion than a lecture ever could

have.<sup>1</sup>

During March Sidney Smith continued his lectures in London. Murray made an agricultural tour to Galgate, Caton, to the Bread-Tax stronghold of Poulton le Sands, and to Lancaster.

Acland opened a vigorous campaign in Buckinghamshire in March. At Whitechurch the farmers answered the Bread-Tax champion themselves before Acland could reply. Acland was itching to get the Duke of Buckingham or one of his agents into a discussion. He inserted a challenge in the Aylesbury News which ended:

The Duke is right or wrong. The Bread Tax is a curse or a blessing. There should not be two opinions on the subject of so vast a multitude. Let there be but one. Let the Duke condescend to convict the League of error or to allow me as their agent to convert him to the truth.<sup>2</sup>

As Acland arrived in Beaconsfield the bellman announced his arrival, a large group of people gathered, and listened to a short address. On his second visit to Beaconsfield there was no bellman due to the interference of the Tories. The free traders, determined that Acland should be heard, procured a "second-hand bellman, who although not able to boast of extraordinary abilities, yet was able to make the wondering inhabitant understand his

<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, March 11, 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., March 11, 1841.

errand."<sup>1</sup> Acland gave his lecture to an enthusiastic if small audience. At Long Crendon Acland was met by a band who hailed him as the friend of the farmer, the tradesman, and the laborer. After the lecture at Hartwell a gentleman called out to ask Acland if he was a paid agent to which Acland replied that he was and wished to know how his arguments could have been affected by that fact. Acland asked, "was not the minister paid, and did his salary affect the truths advanced from the pulpit? Was not everyone paid for what they did?" Here a laborer called out, "Yes, everybody but the poor man and he is not half paid for what he does." "Very good," replied Acland, "and it is to improve his condition that we advocate the repeal of the bread tax."<sup>2</sup> A few of the gentry at Thame were ejected from the meeting, but they returned to charge the crowd on horseback; a scene of great confusion followed.

Acland's first two lectures at Brill went off with only a few interruptions but the lecturer's attack on the principles of the Duke of Buckingham was too much for the Duke's agents. As Acland returned to Brill for his third lecture, men fought along the road over whether he should be allowed to enter the town. At five o'clock the constables distributed a barrel of ale freely in the public

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, April 8, 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, April 21, 1841.

highway immediately opposite the entrance to Mr. Timm's farm where Acland was to lecture. Acland arrived and the crowd wanted to get at him, but the constables assured the people they were in too great a hurry for Mr. Acland had a right to go where he pleased and they had a right to follow him:

A scene of great confusion ensued; the drunken boxers now squaring and sparing at Mr. Acland, now reeling against him, some thrusting their fists in his face, others abusing him in the choicest terms of blackguardism . . . by a momentary rally of honest fellows, aided by the energetic efforts of Mr. Timms. Mr. Acland was now forced within some railings separating the yard from the garden, where he remained in safety during nearly an hour of the most disgraceful riot. . . . Reid, mounted a tub and attempted to get his creatures to praise the Duke of Buckingham. He concluded by proposing three cheers for his Grace, which were accordingly hiccupped and then echoed by three cheers for Acland from hundreds of the Independent peasantry congregated in dense masses on the elevated ground on the other side of the yard. . . . Mr. Acland endeavored to take advantage of the temporary lull, mounted a table, and commenced addressing the people. A rush was instantly made at him by the drunken mob, the peasantry pressing forward to his defense, and the struggle became desperate. Mr. Acland was loudly protesting against the cowardice and brutality of the brewer, constables, and farmers, who were pelting him with stone and mud, when the weight of the contending parties threw down the pallings and broke the table from which the lecturer had at that moment descended. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Timms rescued Acland and, fearing further damage, Acland withdrew promising to return and lecture.

In the beginning of April, 1841, the Council sent an invitation to each elector of Lancaster to meet a deputation from the League. Murray was sent ahead to

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, April 21, 1841.

visit some of the neighboring villages included in the parliamentary borough to lecture to the farmers and fishermen who were uninformed about the Bread Tax. As a result of these careful preparations, an overflow crowd met in the music hall to hear the League speakers.

The lecturers were again scattered in April. At Oldham Paulton spoke for one hour and three quarters to some 1,200 people, then discussed with Leach, a Chartist leader. Again at Warrington Paulton discussed with the Chartists. Murray made a tour through Lancashire and North Cheshire. Sidney Smith continued in Kent and Surrey. Griffith was at Holyhead and Rhosymedre.

In April, 1841, the delegates from the principal anti-Corn Law associations met in Manchester to determine the course of action to coincide with Mr. Villiers' annual motion. About 2,000 attended the first evening meeting at the Corn Exchange. James Wilson, a delegate from London, moved that the meeting recommend that the Council of the National Anti-Corn Law League invite, by circular, deputies from all the anti-Corn Law associations to assemble in London at the time when Villiers would bring forward his annual motion. . . .<sup>1</sup> Villiers, the main speaker, dwelt on the flagrant deviation which the Corn Laws presented from the principle of legislation for the public good. Richard Cobden, John Bright, and Thomas

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 200-201.



Milner Gibson made short speeches. Some two or three hundred Chartists printed their own tickets to gain admittance to one of the meetings; they even succeeded in obtaining a short hearing for one of their leaders.

On April 21, 1841, the name of the Circular was changed to Anti-Bread Tax Circular in order that:

the title may exactly express the character and objects of the Circular. Our principle is more clearly explained in the words anti-bread tax than anti-corn law. Ours is not so much a question of political economy as of justice and humanity. . . .

McCord noted that all of the League's propaganda of this time gave greater prominence to religious and humanitarian arguments against the Corn Laws.<sup>1</sup> The "Big Loaf" became the symbol of free trade agitation.

After a defeat in the debate on the sugar duties, the Whig ministry announced they would bring the question of corn duties to a division. Cobden was elated. He carefully explained the situation to J. B. Smith:

Our work is but now beginning. The minister's can't carry a fixed duty--I doubt if the opposition will now let them have their month's time to prepare the measure. They will probably resist them by a vote of want of confidence. . . .

Then the large boroughs would have to make fights for their freedom from feudal tyranny once more. Depend on it that there is work enough cut out for the League--The aristocracy will give nothing except by compulsion . . . [all this] will inspire our forces with hopes and make anti-corn law agitation fashionable--as we can now point to Lord John as one of us! I expect to see a great effort now amongst the Whig

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 91.

ministers. Agitation is rather a new occupation for them, and therefore we must make allowances for their beginning.<sup>1</sup>

After May 2 when this letter was written, events in the House were substantially as Cobden had foreseen.

A new campaign to fill the empty League coffers began. At a special meeting of the Council John Bright moved that under the more favorable circumstances in which the question of the Bread Tax was now placed that redoubled efforts be made to obtain a full expression of public opinion. Deputations from the League were sent to several cities to rouse the people to send petitions in favor of total repeal to their representatives. Cobden also wanted to test areas of strength for the upcoming election. The electors of Wigan met in the commercial hall to hear George Wilson, Richard Cobden, and Archibald Prentice argue for total repeal. At Blackburn the electors met Henry Ashworth, Thomas Bazley, John Brooks, and Cobden in the theatre. On May 6 a large meeting was convened by placard, on one day's notice, at the music hall, Liverpool. Thomas Bazley told the electors that the League had come to get the assistance of Liverpool; Bright, Brooks, and then Cobden had argued for total repeal when a Mr. Dix succeeded in getting the floor for half an hour to speak against the League. Cobden rose and, according to

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Cobden to J. B. Smith, May 2, 1841.

Prentice, "cut the ground from under the friend of the bread tax."<sup>1</sup> William Rathbone and Lawrence Heyworth supported a repeal resolution which concluded the meeting.

During May Acland continued his agitation in Buckinghamshire. Many of the farmers at Ivinghoe told Acland they regretted that they had been compelled by their employers to sign a petition in favor of the present system. At Aylesbury the Duke of Buckingham got up a meeting which resolved to continue monopoly. Acland then lectured to some 2,000 in the market place, but the Duke's people would not discuss the question. Acland continued to Ashton, Clinton, and Bedford. The Standard, declaring Acland's tours a failure, elicited a report from Acland that in the last eleven weeks he had given upwards of sixty lectures with only one failure (Brill) and had one hundred fifty petitions signed.<sup>2</sup>

Sidney Smith continued his lecturing in the south of England. He met Bell, the editor of the Conservative Journal, at the town hall, Reading. George Wilson joined Smith for a lecture at Uxbridge. Also Smith was still attempting to stir London: the Circular lists him as the Secretary of the Metropolitan Association as early as May, 1841.

Paulton was conducting an active campaign in Kent.

<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 207.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, May 26, 1841.

At Gravesend three hundred people signed a petition for repeal and at Folkstone the mayor introduced Paulton. He lectured in Canterbury where the secretary of the Agriculture Society was prominently engaged in taking notes and asking questions during the first lecture, but he was so heartily laughed at he remained near the door the second night.

The free trade proposals of the Whig government brought about their defeat; thus the question of the Corn Laws became a prominent election issue. This greatly enhanced the importance of the League. Cobden told his brother that:

the ministerial move on the Corn Law has given a vast impulse to the question--before it was an abstraction, now it is of practical interest to a great body of politicians--it has brought a sudden accession to our strength, both in men and money. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The League was quick to take advantage of the new atmosphere; Brooks and Callender, Council members, made a quick trip through Hyde, Bolton, and other places close to Manchester and returned with promises of £1,650. On June 4, the day Russell had promised a discussion of the Corn Laws, Peel won a want of confidence motion. Shortly afterwards Parliament was dissolved and an election called. The radicals united with the Whigs and thus hoped to survive the election. No one saw a return of the Whigs to power, but many Whig leaders hoped to enjoy a

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 92.

comfortable opposition. Nevertheless, in the elections held from June 28 to July 17 a number of prominent Whigs were defeated. Lords Howick and Morpeth both suffered because of the Whig change on the Corn Laws. The League itself did not do too badly. Cobden was elected for Stockport, Bowring for Bolton, Brotherton for Salford, Scott for Walsall, Walker for Bury, Villiers for Wolverhampton, and Mark Philips and Milner Gibson for Manchester. J. B. Smith was defeated at Dundee by the last minute appearance of an ultra-radical candidate. The election of Cobden was particularly significant. He became more frequently recognized as the leader of the League in and out of Parliament.<sup>1</sup> Villiers, because of his aristocratic background and his need to be in London during all law terms, gradually gave way to the manufacturer and Manchester-resident Cobden. By June, 1841, the Circular was calling Cobden the man who was the impersonation of the free trade principles.

From the beginning of the anti-Corn Law agitation in 1838 the League had not been able to hold a public meeting in Manchester without the interference of the Chartists. Large bands of Chartists from Todmorden, Bury, Stockport, and other towns close to Manchester were only too pleased to march over to Manchester and break up

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 95.

League meetings.<sup>1</sup> After the defeat of the League in February, 1839, Cobden secured the support of Edward Watkin, the son of a Leaguer. Soon an Operative Anti-Corn Law Association was holding meetings regularly on two evenings a week in St. John's Tavern. Watkin spent nearly two years organizing the working men into efficient, well-drilled units; Manchester was split up into sections and each section had its own officers, banners, etc. Because of Daniel O'Connell's support for the League, Cobden was able to secure for Watkin a working alliance between the free traders and the Manchester Irish. There were only some 60,000 Irish in Manchester but, as McCord described them, "they were so strictly organized, that in the twinkling of an eye, one or two thousand can be collected at any given spot."<sup>2</sup> Watkin and Duggan, the leader of the Irish repealers in Manchester, came to an agreement to break up the Chartist control of public meetings in the area. Watkin could offer the support of his well-organized free traders plus the financial resources of the League while Duggan brought the rough and tough "Irish Lambs." By the summer of 1841 Cobden and his allies were ready to put an end to the Chartist interference at every public meeting.

The decisive battle for control of public meetings

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

in Manchester took place in June, 1841. Watkin issued the challenge by calling an open-air meeting for Stevenson Square for June 8. The best description of the day of the meeting is given by Watkin in his diary:

On Wednesday morning I was up before six and went off immediately to Newall's Buildings. I found Howie sending off the flags to the various districts. I went thence to Stevenson Square, where the hustings for the meeting were partly erected. A few of the Chartists were there even at that early hour, and cheek by jowl with the hustings was a machine for the accommodation of Chartists orators. I went from the square to Kennedy's in Cable Street, and thence to Timothy Malhern's. At this man's house I found about a score of 'boys' all ready for work. These men were ostensibly 'flag-bearers', but from their being ornamented with good blackthorn sticks it was clear they understood the real meaning of their office, viz, A.C.L. police.

I took these men with me to the square, and we rather astonished the Chartists, who had increased somewhat in numbers by this time, with our appearance.

I got my horse and we went back to Kennedy's, where our band assembled. After some preliminary preparations we marched up Oldham Road, down Livesey Street and George's Road, to the Queen Anne, in Long Millgate. Here we took in tow the procession forming there, and went all together to Stevenson Square. We got there at a quarter to ten. The place was nearly filled with people. The Ardwick, Hulme, Salford No. 1., Newton and Failsworth, and Hatcliffe detachments had arrived, and were either in the square or in Lever Street and Hilton Street. . . . At half-past ten I went on the hustings. Almost immediately after, a body of Chartists from the country, carrying two banners, one of which had described on it, 'No new poor law', and the other, 'Down with the Whigs', made their appearance, and began to advance to the front, pushing our friends to the right and left. This was submitted to pretty quietly, but at last from the violent conduct of the parties, and from the view of the hustings being partly hidden by the flags, an attempt was made to pull them down. This was immediately resisted, and the Chartists showed their preparations for a row by drawing forth short staves, made desperate at seeing this, and particularly by the brutal conduct of a fellow who nearly killed a poor man with a blow from an iron bar, rushed at the flags,

tore them down, broke the shafts in pieces, and laid about them to such a good effect as to drive the Chartists out of the Square, leaving a lane, about four yards wide, next the Church, and reaching down as far as Lever Street. . . .<sup>1</sup>

While all this was taking place Cobden took the chair and the resolutions against the Corn Laws were carried by large numbers of hands. Sleigh started to speak in favor of the Corn Laws but was howled and hooted down. The meeting ended with a great procession by the allies through Manchester, ending in St. Ann's Square where all gave three cheers for repeal and three for the Queen.

The League never again found it impossible to hold a public meeting in Manchester. To show the proportions of the victory and its permanence, it is interesting to note one other victory of the allies over the Chartists. Feargus O'Connor himself decided to test the strength of Manchester in March, 1842. Watkin described the result to Cobden:

The result was a tremendous fight--all the furniture was smashed to atoms--desks--chairs--gas pipes--were used as weapons & the result is something like as follow--'The lion'--the king of Chartism--F.O'C--knocked down 3 times--has he says 7 wounds--six he can tell the position of--the 7th. was I believe inflicted as he was running away--wh. he did after fighting about two minutes.

Christopher Doyle very much hurt--Bailey--confined to his bed--Murray--ditto--4 others (Chartists) seriously hurt--Revd. Schofield--black eye--loose teeth--cutlip--contusions behind (got in following Feargus)--4 of the 'lambs' badly hurt--2 with their souls

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, pp. 100-101.



fractured--they however are used to it & will soon be well. The damage is estimated at £40. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The free traders were the masters of public meetings in Manchester from 1841 until the end of the agitation.

Each of the League's lecturers was active in behalf of free trade candidates in June. At Salford Rawson, Paulton, and John Brooks joined Cobden on the platform. The mayor of Deal refused Paulton the use of the town hall, but the council overruled him. Murray debated Livesey, a Chartist, in the market place, Preston. Prentice spoke to some 1,200 from the balcony of the town hall, Skipton. Acland was in Liverpool and Sidney Smith remained in the south of England. Finnigan met Sleigh, of the London Agricultural Society, in debate at the Corn Exchange, Manchester. Some 1,250 tickets were sold by each side. Greig moved an Anti-Corn Law resolution which was passed at the conclusion of the debate when the Circular commented, "Dr. Sleigh, having to our knowledge converted many to our righteous cause, the meeting terminated."<sup>2</sup>

The League appointed a new lecturer in June, 1841. The announcement came in the form of a resolution from the British India Society which read:

The committee of the British India Society agrees that Mr. George Thompson shall render his services gratuitously to the Council of the National Anti-Corn Law League during the present struggle for the

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, June 16, 1841.

abolition of the Corn Laws! Mr. Thompson at the same time, retaining his connection with the British India Society. . . .<sup>1</sup>

George Thompson had had a long and successful career as a speaker for the Anti-Slavery Society when he joined the League. On June 25 a tea party was held at the Corn Exchange to welcome Thompson as a speaker. Some eight hundred ladies and gentlemen were present; the guest list included numerous ministers, friends, and former associates of Thompson's. Although George Thompson confined his efforts to the large towns and often spoke to ladies' gatherings, the addition of his prestige to the League was significant.

There is some evidence that J. S. Buckingham, world traveler and speaker, became a League lecturer in the spring of 1841.<sup>2</sup> The Circular announced that he had been engaged by the anti-monopolists of Yorkshire to speak in Huddersfield in June, 1841. Turner maintained that Cobden wrote and asked Buckingham to return from the United States and lecture on behalf of repeal.<sup>3</sup> The Circular lists very few of Buckingham's activities.

In August, 1841, Parliament assembled. The Lords had a lengthy debate on the Address which became a

<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 231.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 229.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph E. Turner, James Silk Buckingham, 1786-1855 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1934), p. 121.

discussion of the Corn Laws. The supporters of the ministers attempted to show that an eight shilling duty would not ruin the agriculturists; but the landowners, fearing further concessions, fought against any change. The House spent four nights on their Corn Law debate. Mark Philips moved the Address. Ewart, Bowring, and Sharman Crawford made an attempt to draw out a leading defender of monopoly but no one would reply. Cobden, making his first appearance in the House, closed the debate with a well organized, closely reasoned speech.<sup>1</sup>

John Curtis, of Ohio in the United States, traveled through the northern counties during the summer and fall of 1841 giving lectures on the Corn Laws. Cobden and other Leaguers often chaired his lectures and he may have been paid by the League.

On August 17, 1841, a conference of seven hundred ministers opened in the town hall, Manchester. They came to discuss the religious and humanitarian issues connected with the Corn Laws. This was by no means a free and open discussion. The ministers who were closely connected with the League, including George Thompson, worked with a staff supplied by the League to carefully structure the conference. Leaguers provided lodging for the delegates; witnesses were prepared and primed to appear before the conference. McCord quotes the testimony of Dr. Malley, a

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<sup>1</sup>See Young for a complete analysis of this speech.

leading Congregationalist, on the carefulness of the League's preparations:

Of the late meeting, I should say it cannot be viewed as the expression of our denomination. Yet, still, it was a very important meeting, and had excited amazing interest throughout the manufacturing districts. I felt rather jealous for the honour of our own body, and did not quite like the multitude of sects with which they were mingled, and the persons of all sorts who called themselves preachers.

Of the meeting I must say that it was managed with amazing tact, skill, energy, and power. I do not think on any other subject, or in any other place, which a meeting could be obtained. This arose partly from the unbounded liberality of the Anti-Corn Law League, who furnished clerks, messengers, doorkeepers, assistants of all kinds, printing, feeding, etc., at the will of the secretaries; partly from the power, and energy, and untiring perseverance, of the secretaries and committees . . . there were many of the Manchester ministers, who devoted themselves to preparing measures, and several others who were scarcely ever in the hall, but sitting in the committee rooms from seven in the morning until ten in the evening. Moreover, the thing never came to a Conference at all, but only a convocation. There was no discussion. The Committee took care to provide resolutions which were moved and seconded, and then to receive information. The room being crowded with spectators checked discussion, which I think fortunate. Besides, the feeling was so general in favour of the extreme view--no 'protection', no 'fixed duty'--that no persons on the other side would have any chance. As an effort of generalship, nothing could have been more complete.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the conference was spontaneous or not, it was one of the most effective propaganda devices used by the League. Many ministers were convinced of the social evils of the Corn Laws and returned to their congregations to preach anti-Corn Law sermons and encourage support of the League. The usefulness of contacts made during the

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, pp. 105-106.

conference was to be measured in later years.

The months following the general election were a time of difficulty for the League leadership. McCord gives the following summation of the problem. Two parties emerged on the League Council. A moderate element of the more influential and respectable Leaguers such as R. H. Greg insisted on a cautious, law abiding policy. The extreme group, led by Archibald Prentice, were constantly advocating dangerous courses. Although the extremists were much smaller in numbers than the moderates, they were noisier, more active, and were among the most hard working members of the Council. On September 29 at a Council meeting attended only by Prentice, Lees, and Howie, all extremists, resolutions were passed breaking off arrangements Cobden had previously made with the London liberal press including the £500 annual subsidy to the Sun. Cobden took up the challenge, induced the moderates to return to the Council, and rescind the September resolutions.

Still the basic problem of what the League should do, what the new campaign should be, was not solved. Cobden wrote to Wilson:

It strikes me after a day or two of respite from the turmoil of London politics that the League wants a revival of some kind to give us a fresh impulse--I hardly know what to suggest but shall merely offer my opinion of the necessity of doing something . . . what can we propose to people to come, and what can we give them to do after we separate. If we could find some

work for our friends in all parts that would be the best plan for uniting us. . . . Of one thing I am certain, that a new move is necessary. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The Council was not lacking in suggestions. The proposal to memorialize the Queen praying for the dismissal of the government was rejected as a partisan plan. The extremists wanted to refuse to pay taxes, but Cobden cautioned that this plan was workable only if several manufacturing areas would join together and this he did not think possible.

The need for a decision was acute if for no other than financial considerations. Hickin, the League's chief clerk, reported a deficit of £1,400 on September 30 and that the "claimants were becoming very clamorous."<sup>2</sup> Eventually the Council decided to call together in Manchester the most influential Leaguers to decide what to do. A private meeting of about one hundred twenty men took place. Cobden reported to J. B. Smith that there was a great cry for new measures, but no one could suggest something concrete that all would agree to do.<sup>3</sup> Cobden and Wilson did not want to attempt a coup, then fail as the Chartists had done. The Birmingham radicals were no help with their demands for renewed parliamentary reform

<sup>1</sup>October 9, 1841.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup>December 4, 1841.

agitation.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the indecision among the Leaguers the lecture campaign during the fall of 1841 was erratic. In October Colonel Thomas Perronet Thompson author of the Catechism on the Corn Laws--the bible of the repealers until the League began pamphlet publication in 1839--began a tour of some of the larger towns on behalf of the League.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Thompson had incurred the wrath of the Manchester liberals when he unexpectedly contested the Manchester seat in 1839; this 1841 tour was the beginning of a reconciliation which brought Colonel Thompson into the ranks of the League speakers until 1846. Finnigan, Curtis from Ohio, Moore, and Acland joined Colonel Thompson at a meeting of the Manchester Operative Association. George Thompson toured Scotland lecturing against the Corn Laws in November, 1841. Sidney Smith began a series of lectures at Chatham, Rochester, Maidstone, and Bishopgate in November. Griffith was at Dolgelly, Claeman, and Festinoig. Acland and Finnigan won another fight with the Chartists at a Carpenter's Hall meeting in Manchester.

Robert Ross Rowan Moore, a barrister and graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, who gave most of his time to

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>L. G. Johnson, General T. Perronet Thompson: 1783-1869 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957), p. 239.

political economy, joined the League as a speaker in the fall of 1841. The first mention of a Moore lecture on the Corn Laws was a report in the Manchester Guardian of a lecture in the Salford town hall on September 8, 1841.<sup>1</sup> In October Moore joined several League lecturers at an Operative meeting in Manchester. On December 23, 1841, he moved a resolution in favor of total and immediate repeal at a meeting in the Mansion House, Dublin; from this meeting until repeal Moore was one of the most active of the League speakers.

George Thompson spent December lecturing near Manchester. Murray formed an Anti-Corn Law Association at Norringham. Colonel Thompson visited Manchester, Huddersfield, Halifax, Barnsley, and Liverpool before attending the Conference of Ministers of North Wales. Bright spoke at the Corn Exchange, Manchester; Moore at the Baptist Chapel, Accrington; Acland at Alnwick and Northumberland; and Paulton in the British school room at Wooton-under-Edge.

Cobden evolved the genesis of a new League plan in the concluding months of 1841. He wrote to J. B. Smith:

Care will be taken to lay before the public in each town . . . a plan organized for getting up petitions. My object in suggesting this is to make the agitation more general and to take away the stigma of its being a millowners question. It will also tend to drub out

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<sup>1</sup>"R. R. R. Moore," Dictionary of National Biography, eds. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, XIII (1937-38), 826.



views by throwing people on their own resources. It already had the effect of giving the agitation a national appearance . . . I am sorry to see Sturge taking up this question. He will be something in our rear to frighten the aristocracy.<sup>1</sup>

The decision to petition again was not new, but the stress of each Anti-Corn Law Association being on its own resources had not been tried before. With Sturge's suffrage movement in the rear to frighten the conservatives, Cobden hoped to gain time to somehow find a new method or a new attack for Corn Law agitation.

In January, 1842, a series of borough and country meetings visited by League delegations began. The woolen manufacturers from Somerset, Wiltshire, and Gloucester met at the White Hart Hotel, Bath, to consider the distress of the manufacturing interest in the west of England. Some 1,500 persons met for an anti-Corn Law tea party at the philosophical hall, Huddersfield, with George Thompson representing the League. On January 5 some eight hundred gathered at the temperance hall, Bolton, to hear Colonel Thompson, George Thompson, Henry Ashworth, and Dr. Bowring. In the front of the gallery a piece of cured foreign beef was suspended weighing 200 lbs. which cost 25s. and at its side a piece of English beef weighing 40 lbs. which had cost the same.<sup>2</sup> Moore, Bright, and Brooks spoke to eight hundred in the Independent Sunday School

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<sup>1</sup>December 4, 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Manchester Guardian, January 12, 1842.

room, Pilkington. At Coventry the crowd in St. Mary's Hall to hear Cobden was far larger than the crowd gathered in the same place three years before when Paulton lectured.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Robert Peel's new plan for a sliding scale to replace the old fixed duty brought havoc to the already uncertain League position. At the end of 1841, Cobden had written to Smith that "the greatest evil that could befall us would be a bona fide concession--The middle classes are a compromising set. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Many liberals, including the Manchester Guardian, were wildly enthusiastic about Peel's proposal. In the sense that the sliding scale was a concession to the League demand for total repeal and admitted the truth of the free trader's contentions, it could be welcomed by the League. Throughout the remainder of the agitation any improvement was attributed to Peel's partial implementation of the League's theories and any reversals to the remaining protection especially the Corn Laws.<sup>3</sup>

On February 14 Lord John Russell opened the adjourned debate in the House of Commons with an exposition of the principles of free trade. After three nights of debate the vote was three hundred forty-nine for Peel's sliding scale to two hundred twenty-six for Russell's

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, February 10, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>In Smith Corn Law Papers.

<sup>3</sup>McCord, p. 118.

amendment. The following Friday Villiers brought forward his motion for total repeal. Peel tried to restrain his colleagues from taking part in the debate, but when he was unsuccessful he spoke himself. Cobden rose to answer Peel, but the Minister won with ninety votes for Villiers' motion and three hundred ninety-three against.

While the League Council was deciding what to do in the spring of 1842, the lecture agitation continued somewhat sporadically. Cobden outlined the philosophy of lecture assignments in a letter to Wilson:

I think our lecturers should be thrown upon the boroughs particularly in the rural districts where we have been opposed. Mr. Acland ought at once to his attacks.

A well prepared account should be taken of the states of all the boroughs in the kingdom in reference to our question. They should be classified and put into lists of Safe -- tolerably Safe -- doubtful -- desperate -- hopeless. Our whole strength should then be thrown upon the doubtful. Electoral Committees should be formed in each borough to look after the registration and we ought if needful to incur some expenditure in these departments.<sup>1</sup>

Cobden's well prepared agitation did not fully materialize, but there were signs of a new schedule for each lecturer. Acland made a short tour into west Scotland in January and February. During May alone Acland gave twenty lectures in the Highland Glens of Scotland. The Stirling Observer noted that this was the first time any agitation had been carried into the peaceful solitude of the

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<sup>1</sup>February 29, 1842.

Highland Glens.<sup>1</sup>

Murray began his January agitation in the small farming towns of Idle, Shipley, Hyde, and Darwen. He continued to Clitheroe and Sabden where a Mr. Moody attempted an interruption, but Murray was able to lecture for one and a half hours then answer questions for twenty minutes. In March Murray worked the borough of Knaresborough then went on to Ripon.

Paulton was in Taunton and Wellington where he helped form an association in January. He received a friendly and fashionable reception from the seaport town of Ilfracombe; at Liskeard the platform was carefully divided in half--half for Paulton's friends and half for his enemies. Paulton continued to Totness, Bodmin, Falmouth, and Launceston. Finnigan represented the League at a tea party in Accrington which closed with the whole company cordially singing the Anti-Corn Law Hymn to the air of the national anthem. Sidney Smith continued to work in London with short lecturing tours out into the south of England. George Thompson gave a series of lectures in Carlisle in February. Later the same month the people of Southampton presented a plate to George Thompson in behalf of his services to free trade.

Sometime late in 1841 or early in 1842 Timothy Falvey, a silk weaver from Macclesfield, became a League

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, June 6, 1842.

lecturer. He lectured at Sunderland and Middlebro where he had a friendly discussion with Binns, a Chartist. At Darlington Falvey helped his audience form their own association then continued to lecture and form associations at Hexham, Chester-le-Street, Wallsend, and South Shields.

Early in 1842 Cobden assigned John Bright the task of securing information about the itinerant Chartists who went from one League meeting to another spreading disruption.<sup>1</sup> Against the Chartists Bright argued that in the short run the repeal of the Corn Laws was a much more realistic and attainable goal than was manhood suffrage. Bright was able to report that William Lovett and his followers were as much concerned as the League was about the ruffian, physical-force Chartists who followed Feargus O'Connor. Bright was not always able to convince the working men that his approach was best as can be seen in the following announcement:

It is stated that Bright, the anti-corn law agitator, is expected to visit the wool fair which will be held in Alnwick shortly, in order to scatter the seeds of disaffection in that quarter. Should he make his appearance, which is not improbable, for the person had impudence for anything of that sort, it is hoped that there may be found some stalwart yeoman ready to treat the disaffected vagabond as he deserves.<sup>2</sup>

In January, 1842, the Circular announced that

<sup>1</sup>Ausubel, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>July 4, 1842.

weekly public meetings of the association would be held to diffuse information and to receive reports of the progress of the cause throughout the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> It seems likely that these meetings were held in Manchester each week, but many were not of sufficient interest or importance to warrant even a report in the Circular. On March 22 Archibald Prentice, Timothy Falvey, Reverend J. W. Massie, and James Acland gave reports of the progress of the lecture agitation to a weekly meeting. On April 26 Finnigan told of his lectures in Shropshire and Moore spoke of his fears for the manufacturers interests if the Corn Laws were not repealed. A special general meeting of the League to decide the future course of action was called for Manchester on May 11; Wilson announced some structural changes that were not to be effected totally until the beginning of a new agitation in the fall of 1842.

The various associations of the Anti-Corn Law League met in conference in London, beginning July 5, 1842. P. A. Taylor of London was called to the chair. John Bright carefully and tactfully described the public apathy which had necessitated this second London conference in one session of Parliament. He concluded by announcing that the purpose of the gathering of delegates was to collect facts from every district and decide "upon some wise and decisive course of action in this great

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<sup>1</sup>January 13, 1842.

crises of our national affairs."<sup>1</sup> George Thompson, in a very emotional speech, condemned the "impious hand of monopoly which had prohibited and restricted the blessings of universal providence," and asked the people to rise up and offer resistance to the Corn Law.<sup>2</sup>

A select group of one hundred fifty conference delegates met with Sir Robert Peel. One delegate from each of the critical manufacturing areas spoke of the suffering and distress caused by the Corn Laws--Ridgway from the Staffordshire Potteries, Brooks from Manchester, Ibbotson from Sheffield, Heyworth from Liverpool, Forester of Stockport, Grundy of Bury, and Whitehead of Leeds. Each day the meetings continued and each day the delegates heard reports of distress in new areas of the country. Cobden's speech on July 8 was speedily printed by Gadsby and the Council requested all associations to circulate it as widely as possible. On Wednesday, July 13 George Thompson made another lengthy speech on the evils of monopoly. On Monday, August 1 the delegates still remaining met to conclude the conference by preparing a full report of the proceedings. After Bright, Hume, Villiers, Cobden, and Daniel O'Connell spoke at length on the need for repeal, the conference was terminated.

The need for a decision about the League's future

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, July 14, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

policy was becoming critical. A reorganization of the propaganda apparatus was nearing completion, but as yet there was no plan to apply this apparatus to. The extremists on the Council had several impractical suggestions. Cobden chose to undermine the faith of the country in Parliament. In a letter to Villers he explained that:

their plan should be to denounce the House of Commons for its corruptions and to dispute its claims to our respect as a tribunal. . . . We must in every possible way discredit the present Parliament. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This was only one of the plans considered by the Council. John Bright's proposal was for the manufacturers to put pressure on the government by the simultaneous shutting down their factories. He hoped this would force the government to make concessions among them the repeal of the Corn Laws to get the factory owners to re-employ the workers. This scheme was not new; the radical Sunday Times had proposed a similar plan in 1840. Cobden explained to Bright why he did not think the scheme could be effective:

Depend on it the plan of a simultaneous stopping of the factories would not succeed. In the first place you can't get people to unite. In the next any attempt on the part of the members of the League would draw upon us the odium from the working classes of throwing them overboard. You will see in today's Morning Star an account of Stirling and Buxton closing their place, and it is stigmatised as the work of the League.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 124.



Bright's proposal was important only because a strike against wage reductions did close many factories in August, 1842. The factories where the first trouble broke out were owned by Leaguers, but there was no evidence that they were trying to carry out Bright's idea. The League was accused of being responsible for the outbreak of the "Plug Plot," as the turn-outs were called, but there was no proof. Even The Times had to retract a month's glaring headlines which blamed the League for instigating the turn-outs. Nevertheless, as McCord concluded, "there can be no doubt that the agents of the League played an important part in creating the atmosphere which enabled the Plug Plot to reach such alarming proportions."<sup>1</sup> Many of the lecturers were supporters of the extreme wing of the League Council and during July and August the League's speakers were agitating in areas where the working man was suffering greatly. The lecturers were using strong language as Croker, in the Quarterly Review article of December, 1842, showed:

Massie talked of repeating the three days in Paris . . . . Acland said time was coming when they must do something more than talk. . . . Murray at Nottingham said he feared the coming of the time when six million people should arise, determined to be free with all the world. . . . Acland and Finnegan [sic] at an Operative meeting talked of compensation for years of misery made by the aristocracy to the labouring millions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Quarterly Review, pp. 258-259.

At a meeting of magistrates and army officers in Manchester one of the army officers listed the agitators whom he thought were responsible for the riot; among those listed were Finnigan and Falvey. Immediately as the outbreak began the leaders of the League realized the dangerous game they had been playing and all the lecturers were recalled at once to Manchester.

The turn-outs precipitated a crisis on the League Council. The moderates and the extremists took sides. R. H. Greg, for the moderates, maintained that the disturbances were Chartists inspired. Bright led the extremists who wanted to use the turn-outs to the League's advantage. The Council meetings of August 15 and 16 were critical. Cobden cautioned:

I have written to Wilson who tells me the League meets tomorrow morning and have advised very strongly that they should be cautious and quiet just now--the League is at this moment under trial by the public for charges laid on by the Tories, Standard & other papers --All that is necessary to rise higher than ever is for us to keep aloof in Manchester from all connection with the present commotions. The result of the present disturbances will be to weaken the government by the unpopularity which it will acquire in putting down the rioters.--The trades & Chartists will be weakened by their reverses.<sup>1</sup>

Of the final Council discussion, Bright reported:

We have had two meetings . . . a majority were for the resolutions I proposed, a copy of which are sent thee by this post--but as a lot were against them--Greg, Wilson, Evans--Wilson sent for Brooks and Callender who spoke strongly against them. I keep my opinion but rather than sacrifice our union I

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 128.

consented to with draw them.

Brooks is now wild with fears of revolution--and Callender is timid and a woman--Brooks and his brother magistrates have signed a placard resolving to put down all meetings indoors or outdoors, legal or illegal!!!

This they will hear of in after days. There is little pluck or firmness in this room . . . the peace of the neighborhood is unbroken beyond the turnout--except Coppock says they are stealing food at Stockport.

John Brooks seems afraid of being laid hold of--the Tories long to have a blow at some of us. Thou ought to be down here I think--don't mind any reports to the contrary.<sup>1</sup>

What Bright was proposing is not clear, but as a leading extremist member on the Council he at least wanted the Council to take the side of the turn-outs. Cobden and Wilson both cautioned moderation and disentanglement. Fortunately for the League moderation prevailed, for the Chartists having the same decision to make elected to support the rioters and because of later prosecutions and jail sentences virtually collapsed as a pressure group.

When order was restored the enemies of the League were still busy trying to affix the blame on the Anti-Corn Law agitators. The official denial was given by Cobden on August 25 at an extremely crowded meeting of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association:

I will venture to say in the name of the Council of the Anti-Corn Law League that not only did the members of that body know or dream of anything of the kind such as has now taken place--I mean the turn-outs for wages--not only did they not know, concoct, wish for, or contemplate such things, but I believe the very last thing which the body of our subscribers would

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, pp. 128-129.

have wished for or desired, is the suspension of their business, and confusion which has taken place in the district. And I pledge my honour as a man, and my reputation as a public man, and a private citizen, that there is not the shadow of a ground for the accusation which has been made against us.<sup>1</sup>

All the details of Cobden's denial were, of course, inaccurate. Cobden himself had contemplated turn-outs, but the main point that the League did not organize or support the Plug Plot was accurate. Of the whole affair McCord concluded, "the Leaguers had had a bad fright; they had played with fire and had burned their fingers--they were in fact very lucky to come out of the affair as well as they did."<sup>2</sup> August, 1842, marked the end of the League's indecision about a future course of action. The moderates were to superintend a lawful agitation which the extremists could now more easily be brought to assist. With the decline of the Chartists and dissention in the ranks of Sturge's suffrage movement, the League became the principal organized radical agitation in the country.

The third period of oral agitation--the beginning of the electoral campaign--was marked primarily with inactivity. This period saw the beginning of the large county meeting of electors called to meet a deputation of the League; also weekly meetings of the League began in Manchester. Both these forms of agitation were to be used

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, September 8, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 131.

much more effectively in the last period of the campaign. The lecturers were on specific regional assignments, usually speaking to free trade electors. This period also saw the success of the League in breaking the Chartist hold on the public meetings in Manchester. The scare thrown into the League with the turn-outs brought a complete halt to the oral agitation campaign in August, 1842.

The Registration and Qualification Campaign:  
September, 1842 - July, 1846

The beginning of a new, carefully-organized phase of the League's propaganda campaign can be traced to the fall of 1842. Many of the reorganization and administrative changes were made by the Council as early as March, 1842, some new lecturers were hired, and some of the plans implemented slowly for the remainder of the year. Nevertheless, the public announcement of the lecture and agitation campaign on October 6 marked the overt beginning of the new phase.

Soon after J. B. Smith contested Walsall in 1841, Joseph Hickin, the leader of the Walsall radicals, was brought to Manchester to take charge of the League office. Ballantyne, the first secretary, was not a model of efficiency but Hickin was keen, hardworking, and skilled in the art of political administration.<sup>1</sup> He soon put the League office on a businesslike basis--accounts were

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 133.

closely scrutinized and correspondence answered. When J. B. Smith was forced to give up his League position, George Wilson became the administrative head of the organization--the chairman of the League Council. With the combined talents of Hickin and Wilson the League headquarters were the most efficient and economical they had ever been.<sup>1</sup>

The new plans for the League activity were, first, the collection of money and, second, the enrollment of new members. Local free traders were elected registrars of their particular areas and one penny members could have their names imprinted on large pages that were to go to the League headquarters to be bound into a large book. Many local associations also issued large ornate membership cards for which they charged one shilling, keeping everything above one penny for local use.

On March 8, 1842, the League Council adopted a plan, which was announced publicly on October 6 to divide the country into twelve districts.<sup>2</sup> Each district was to

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>Northern District: Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham, Westmorland; Manufacturing District: Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire; Midlands District: Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire; Iron District: Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire Monmouthshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire; Buckingham District: Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Huntingshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire; Eastern District: Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk; London District: Essex, Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, Sussex; Southern District: Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Hampshire; Bath

have its own permanent lecturer who, besides speaking, was expected to act as a regional secretary and organizer.

The Circular of September 22 spent nearly two columns giving a few words of advice and direction to the lecturers:

1. The lecturers should as much as possible adapt their addresses to the present times and to the present conditions. They must be fully prepared to prove, that the great amount of taxation in this country has been borne only in consequence of the extensive nature of our foreign commerce; and to show that, whenever trade has flourished the revenue has been prosperous, while the reverse has been the case when commerce and manufacturers have been depressed.
2. The especial and constant use of the population and employment argument cannot fail to have a powerful effect in the rural districts.
3. We apprehend there will be little difficulty in making clear to the comprehension of the people in the agricultural districts, the working of the present Corn Law, by showing how it admits foreign grain in overwhelming quantities just at harvest time, when the poorer and smaller farmers are obliged to sell their corn at low prices, to pay monopoly raised rents.
4. The fallacy and mischievousness of those who labour to persuade the working people that their interests are opposed to those of the capitalists, must be fairly met and exposed.
5. No opportunity should be lost of exposing the fallacy that the repeal of the Corn Law will reduce wages.

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District: Somersetshire, Dorsetshire; Southwestern District: Devonshire, Cornwall; North Wales District: Anglesey, Carnarvonshire, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Merionethshire, Montgomeryshire; South Wales District: Cardiganshire, Radnorshire, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthen-shire, Breconshire, Glamorganshire.

6. To advance our question, the lecturer must avail himself of all the means that may lie in his way. He will have to write letters to the newspapers, and should make himself acquainted with the editors of all the liberal journals. He should write frequent letters to the Council, giving particulars of his progress, the state of the country, and the condition of the people. He should make himself as familiar as his other avocations will allow, with the state of the parliamentary registration in his district, he should obtain lists of voters, and take care to have electors supplied with tracts. What is perhaps, of more importance than all is, that he get the active co-operation of new good men in every place, and let them form themselves into an association, not merely to choose its officers, make one flash, and then go out, but zealously and energetically to continue and carry forward the good work to its completion.

Acland was dispatched to the neighborhood of the Duke of Cleveland.<sup>1</sup> By October 18 he had completed his agitation in Durham and went on to Barnard Castle, where he reported a "whole mass" of hands were held up on the proposition that the Duke was ignorant of the influence of the Corn Laws. In November Acland was delighted that he was finding much less difficulty in carrying the general feeling of a meeting with him than he had ever found before.

Murray was assigned to Derbyshire.<sup>2</sup> At Worksop he reported:

Prior to lecturing, a message was sent to the theatre requesting my attendance on Sir Thomas White at the public office. . . . He informed me that a letter had been received from the Duke of Portland on

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, September 24, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



the subject of my lecture; that he, as a county magistrate, had sent for me to give me warning that my words would be taken down, and that if any inflammatory language was used, duty would compel him to notice it. . . . I repaired to the Theatre which was filled with a respectable class of hearers, consisting of part of the leading medical and legal gentry and others. This did not add to my confidence, as I came prepared for a storm and the disappointment might, I fear, have taken away some portion of the small power that I possess of convincing men. The most perfect order and attention prevailed.<sup>1</sup>

In November Murray lectured at Spalding and Boston, then he continued to the agricultural district of Lincoln before going to Sheffield and Hull.

Falvey was assigned to the East Riding of York.<sup>2</sup> At Malton he spoke chiefly to the farmers; at Whitby he talked of the irony of a seaport town which was dependent on trade being represented by a monopolist. After visiting small towns for a month Falvey was enthusiastic about his reception:

You can have no idea in Manchester, unless you have witnessed it, of the enthusiasm with which the honest, warm-hearted, unsophisticated labourers enter into our views. They perceive the justice of our cause, the force of our arguments and the rottenness of the system which we attack; and having no personal interest to bind them to monopoly, they come with all the ardour, and zeal of men converted by the power of truth, the love of virtue, and the pleadings of humanity. . . .<sup>3</sup>

At York in December the Chartists tried to force a chairman on Falvey, but he resisted and three quarters of the

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, October 6, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Manchester Guardian, September 24, 1842.

<sup>3</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, November 3, 1842.

audience supported him. Falvey continued in the North Riding of Yorkshire during December.

Finnigan was assigned to Yorkshire.<sup>1</sup> He lectured at Bridgnorth and Trowbridge, but could not find a room at Wenlock so he just distributed tracts. At Wellington Finnigan had to begin his lecture with only fifty-three in the audience, but by the time he had finished reading Lord Chief Justice Denman's opinion of the right of Englishmen to meet and legally, peaceably, and constitutionally to discuss the grievances under which they might be suffering, he had collected another hundred people. In November he was at Shrewsbury and Broseley; in December at Ironbridge and Salop.

Paulton was assigned to Worcestershire and Herefordshire.<sup>2</sup> Using Hereford as a headquarters, Paulton organized the distribution of tracts. He lectured at Monmouth and Ross in November; at Worcester, Stourbridge, and Accrington in December. Griffith returned to South Wales. From Narberth he reported that the farmers were now willing, at least, to talk about the subject of the Corn Laws. Sidney Smith was not listed as a League lecturer after October although he still spoke for the League at London meetings and undoubtedly was assigned to the London agitation. Colonel Thompson made a tour for

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, September 24, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the League late in November.

On November 17, 1842, Wilson announced that three new lecturers had been hired by the League. Actually five new lecturers joined the League sometime during 1842. J. S. Buckingham, who has been previously noted, was assigned to tour the large towns and boroughs in the kingdom. In November Buckingham visited Preston and Ashton; in December Bolton, Rochdale, Oldham, Warrington, and Lancaster. Although Buckingham was the most prestigious of the new lecturers, Daniel Liddell was the most experienced political agitator to join the League.<sup>1</sup> He was assigned to the Northern District with headquarters at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His introduction to the League may have been through Bright to whom he sent full accounts of his lectures.<sup>2</sup> Liddell began in the rural districts of Northumberland. At Wooler he spoke to the farmers who had come to town to pay their rent to the Earl's agent. From Harbottle he reported:

In a great part of that district the farmers have short leases, and, in looking into the poll book of the last election, I find that they generally voted as their landlords voted. The subject of my mission had not previously been brought before the inhabitants of that district by any lecturer; and I found great timidity on the part of all classes to appear in favour of free trade. . . . I am happy to say that no

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<sup>1</sup>In 1836 he published Suggestions Relative to the Best Means for Diffusing Useful Knowledge Among the Miners in the North of England; after the League agitation he went on to become a Liberal Party organizer at Tyneside.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, November 3, 1842.

landlord or farmer prevented any in their employment or under their influence from attending my lectures and that my audience comprised all political sects . . . .<sup>1</sup>

In December Liddell visited Northumberland and Durham.

Two of the new lecturers were sent to agricultural areas. The first was a man named Clarke who was assigned to North Staffordshire. In November he reported going to Stafford and spending a week traveling, visiting all the shops and respectable houses, leaving at each a copy of Mr. Cobden's speech and of "Authorities on the Corn Laws."<sup>2</sup> In November he visited Stone and Eccleshall. A. L. Saul was the second lecturer assigned to the agricultural districts. In November he spoke at Middleton, Radcliffe, and Heywood; in December he formed an association at Hazelgrove.

John Jenkins, who sometimes was listed with an M. A. after his name, was the fifth new lecturer of 1842. The only information available about him was his lecture assignment to the south of Wales; he lectured both in Welsh and English and assisted in the translation of the League tracts into Welsh.

Besides the expanded lecture campaign, a second important facet of the new agitation was the holding of weekly meetings of the League beginning September 15,

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, December 1, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

1842. A certain amount of business was transacted at each meeting, but the majority of the time was taken up with speeches of the leaders and friends of repeal. On September 15 the Anti-Corn Law Association and the registration committees of the League met. Hickin read some correspondence. Griffith reported that his campaign in Wales was going well--some 50,000 signatures were expected before the next meeting of Parliament. William Rawson talked of the reasons the lecturers had been recalled and suggested that the time had come to send them out again. Joseph Brotherton told the meeting he associated with the League because the repeal of the Corn Laws would benefit all classes. John Brooks concluded the meeting by developing a clever analogy about Peel playing the organ but not caring who blowed--so the League must blow away at him.

The meeting of October 6 officially began the weekly series of meetings and was the most important of that series for its announcements of the new agitation. Wilson announced that the entire kingdom had been organized into twelve districts and that a lecturer had been appointed to each district. The weekly meetings were to (1) to hear the progress of the agitation, (2) to hear the correspondence received at the League headquarters, and (3) to have the opportunity of listening to the addresses of the leading men connected with the movement. Hickin

read letters from Murray, Finnigan, and Griffith. Richard Cobden, the main speaker, discussed the fall in the price of produce and the dissatisfaction this was producing; he called for the League to stick to the ideal of total repeal. In a surprise announcement, Cobden told of Wilson's plan to raise a £50,000 fund. He concluded by recommending the works of Colonel Thompson for statistics and arguments for repeal and thanking Duncan McLaren of Edinburgh for his contributions to the Scottish agitation. McLaren made a short report; Thomas Bazley and John Bright described the suffering among the people. John Brooks concluded the meeting with a few words on a text of Lord Norpeth's that "no better mode of cheating a nation could be devised than the present Corn Laws."<sup>1</sup>

The League met on October 20 to receive the proposals of the Council for raising the great League fund; Wilson issued the call for £50,000 to be paid by January, 1843. He asked if the task seemed too large for two million people, who petitioned Parliament for repeal, to raise one million shillings or 200,000 crowns. In each town a collection committee was to be formed; a beautifully engraved card was to be given each collector. On each card would be written a sum of money the collector would obtain and send to Manchester. In the large towns one person might take care of a card himself; in the

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, October 20, 1842.

smaller towns a group of people might form a committee to collect for the League. All money would be due before the great League January meeting. Acland, Paulton, Brooks, and Moore gave reports of their lectures to conclude the meeting.

In November the League added an additional task to an already heavy load for the district lecturers. A packet of anti-Corn Law tracts was to be sent to every parliamentary elector in the country. The distributors were to gather information about the political affiliations and electoral qualifications of each elector they visited. McCord described the efficiency with which this distribution was carried out in the example of South Cheshire:

the agent made out lists, based on the electoral registers, of suitable days' journeys for his assistants, who would take out 50-100 packets of tracts each morning, following always a day behind the agent himself so that they arrived at a new centre to find the lists for the next day already made out for them.<sup>1</sup>

Large sums of money were needed for all of this increased agitation activity. The chief method used by the League for stirring up enthusiasm for the collection of the £50,000 fund was to send a deputation of the League to a specially called tea party, soirée, or other function. Bright, Cobden, and Moore attended a tea party at Coventry; Bright and Cobden a meeting at the amphitheatre,

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 135.

Liverpool. On November 21 Bright and Cobden spoke to five hundred persons at Accrington; again they spoke on the 23rd at the music hall, Sheffield. Cobden, Bright, Brooks, and Ashworth joined six hundred at tea at the philosophical hall, Huddersfield. Bright and Moore spoke in the Whitehall assembly room, Kendal on November 29.

Throughout December, 1842, meetings were called in the various large towns to hear deputations from the League and to raise money. Bright and Moore were among the most active canvassers. They spoke at Wolverhampton, Sunderland, Darlington where £100 was subscribed, at Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, South Shields, Belper and Stourbridge before the twenty second of December. Cobden, Bowring, and Colonel Thompson met the people of Leeds on December 6. Cobden, Bright, Bowring, and Buckingham spoke to a large crowd in the theatre, Rochdale, where £1,350 were subscribed before the meeting adjourned. Bowring, Moore, and Bright spoke at Bradford; and Cobden, Brooks, Prentice, and Ashworth at Blackburn on December 8. Bright went on to Nottingham and Holmfirth by himself. On December 19 Bowring, Brotherton, Brooks, Cobden, Moore, and Bright met with some eight hundred persons for a tea party at Bury. When the subscriptions at the party had come down to 5s., Prentice reported:

a working man rose, and said such as he could not give half-crowns, that if a box were sent round they would give what they could. 'Take that,' said the chairman, and threw his hat towards the speaker amid great



laughter and cheers. 'And take that,' said Mr. Brooks, throwing his hat in another direction and another shouted and a dozen hats were flying toward various parts of the room, returning loaded with coppers to the amount of £6 or £7. Mr. Cobden said he would rather see these humble though spontaneous contributions than if there had been as many sovereigns as pence.<sup>1</sup>

Saul and Bright went to Dudley on December 21; Bright and Villiers to the music hall, Wolverhampton on the 23rd. On December 29 Cobden, Brooks, and Moore met with the people of Warrington.

The League agitation was thriving at the end of 1842. Prentice noted:

the lecturers were, at some 40 meetings a week, giving effective instructions to the people.

Even the working men of their numbers were a match in argument to the few educated persons who, here and there, attempted to defend monopoly.

But two or three of them had encountered a fierce physical opposition, from their pressing, perhaps a little too vehemently, the injustice of sacrificing the manufacturing to the agricultural interest . . . .<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Cobden wrote to a Swiss friend:

We have, at the end of four years agitation, got a pretty strong hold of public opinion, and at the present moment the Free Trade party is gaining ground more rapidly than at any former period. The Whig aristocracy will be compelled to come over to us, for Peel will occupy Lord John's position, & unless the latter moves on to our principle, he will be tripped up by his rival. There is no earthly doubt now of the ultimate triumph of our cause. It is merely a question of time.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Prentice, I, 416-417.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>3</sup>McCord, p. 136.

League members began 1843 with many hopes and much enthusiasm. They looked forward to the general election of 1848, hoping to exploit all the lawful means in the current political system to influence the electors. The agitation of this last phase, 1842 to 1846, is almost exclusively the story of the League's attempts to change the complexion of Parliament by ensuring the return of a free trade majority at the next general election. Various devices were used to win over existing electors and to create new electors. The lecturers were used primarily in connection with large mass meetings and in election campaigns. In both areas their usual assignment was to lay the groundwork, whip up enthusiasm for repeal, and ensure an overflowing audience for the League deputation. Some courses of lectures were given to enlighten the populace, but these were mainly in the farming areas.

The League expanded its support of the London press at the beginning of this last campaign. In 1839 Cobden had come to an agreement with the Sun, where it was to give full support to the League in its columns in return for £500 annual payment. The Penny Satirist also received an annual subsidy for inserting striking woodcuts. Late in 1842, as the League was planning the collection of the £50,000 fund in London, a broad agreement was reached with the London press. The League agreed to buy 3,000 copies of eight weekly papers who promised to include an

editorial warmly recommending the League fund to their readers. The total cost to the League was about £500.<sup>1</sup> These papers were widely distributed in inns, pubs, clubs, and trains. Thus the League was able to reach a much wider audience than was possible with its own publications.

The usual large conference of anti-Corn Law delegates was held in Manchester January 30 to February 3, 1843, to provide an opportunity to get additional subscriptions as well as show the strength of the League just before the opening of Parliament. The theme of the conference was the contrast between the strength of the League in 1839 and that of 1843. The new Free Trade Hall in Manchester was completed just in time for the meetings. Prentice gives the following description of the hall:

The site of the Hall is St. Peter's Field . . . it is sufficient to say of the exterior that it is a substantial brick erection . . . the dimensions are one hundred thirty five feet by one hundred feet. The height of the walls is 27 feet . . . to secure greater comfort and convenience to company set down for admission at the principal entrances. A spacious awning, extending the whole length of the front of the Hall has been thrown across South-Street, and interval communications have thus been secured with the Wellington Hotel, which was found capable of supplying, ante-rooms and places of meeting for the committees and banquets.

The dias is of three different elevations, running the whole width of the building. . . . An area of fourteen thousand one hundred and seventy-five square feet . . . three galleries which extend along the two sides, and across the farther end of the Hall . . . the front is covered with drapery, having the

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 182.

appearance of a deep crimson velvet, with rich ornamental design printed on it in gold, representing a sheaf of wheat labelled with the little magic word 'Free,' encircled by a wreath of olive leaves . . . a line of massive columns support each gallery. . . . The walls of the hall are papers, the colour being a good representation of grained oak, and the cornice which surrounds it is of crimson. . . . There are sixteen gas burners . . . the four center ones having thirty six jets of gas and the others eighteen jets. The effect of these immense bodies of flame is softened by shades made of silk rendered transparent, conveying a good representation of ground glass, but they are richly painted. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The delegates met at noon on January 30 to elect a chairman and committees to carry on the business of the conference. That same evening the first great aggregate meeting of the League was held in the Free Trade Hall. Only registered members of the League and deputies from other towns were admitted to hear the reports on the progress of the great League fund. Wilson read a lengthy report of the amounts subscribed from each town. Moore told the audience he would not address them but that they might address little observations to him which he would read to the audience, i.e., they were to write their names, addresses, and the amount they wished to subscribe to the fund on a little piece of paper and hand it up to him. For some time Brooks and Moore received pledges and announced even the smallest amounts to the audience. All the lights went out and the Reverend Massie spoke to the audience in the dark while the lights were being fixed.

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, II, 8-11.

Finally Moore announced that £1,400 had been raised in the room to bring the total now collected by the League in the current campaign to £42,000. Bright announced that Cobden would be absent from the entire conference because of the death of one of his children.

On January 31 the delegates met to consider the effects of the Corn Laws on the agricultural classes. R. H. Greg explained that, as a farmer of six hundred acres and landlord of some three thousand acres, he hoped it would be to the satisfaction of the meeting if he took the chair. Milner Gibson maintained that the farmers would be more prosperous if they had a free exchange and sale of goods. He also pointed to the necessity for repeal if the farmers were to be granted long leases. Alderman Walker maintained that when trade and commerce flourished there was an increase in the consumption of agricultural produce and a proportionate diminution of the poor rates.

The third session of the conference was given over to the consideration of the effect of the Corn Laws on commerce and the manufacturer. Members of each of the large manufacturing areas--Bazley of Manchester, W. H. Greg of Bolton, Hardcastel of Sunderland, Taunton of the silk trade, Scholefield of Birmingham, Baxter of Dundee, Plint of Leeds and the woolen trade, Baines of Liverpool--gave lengthy reports of distress in each of their areas.

On the evening of February 1 the first large banquet was held in the Free Trade Hall. Some 3,800 were present. Milner Gibson and Colonel Thompson talked of the League sources of support. The featured speaker of the evening was Daniel O'Connell who was given a long and enthusiastic reception. He organized his speech as if he were the Counsel against the Corn Laws accusing them of the crimes of absurdity and of the utmost extent of cruelty. Bright and Brooks gave short speeches on the vote of thanks.

On February 2 the delegates met to consider the effects of the Corn Laws on the physical, moral, and religious condition of the people. The Reverend Dr. Burnes of Paisley, the chairman, told the delegates that a Protestant minister was a citizen of the world; he must see that God's abundance, which was now given only to the carnal and worldly ambitions, was given to all to enjoy. P. B. Holland gave some statistics on mortality then claimed that the greatest cause of mortality was the scarcity of food which was caused by the Corn Laws. The Reverend J. Gilbert of Nottingham told the ministers that they ought to search out the causes of the misery they saw all around them. In the following four hours before the close of this session of the conference some fifteen Protestant ministers spoke for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

One of the most important decisions of the conference was to move the headquarters of the League to London.

Leaguers had long been sensitive to the close identification between the agitation for repeal and the manufacturing interests of Manchester. More importantly the League now wanted to tap the wealth of the capital for the £50,000 fund. The London free traders had not proved capable of themselves organizing the campaign so the Council decided to take over the London agitation. With much publicity League offices were opened at 67 Fleet Street. Nevertheless, there was no real shift of the concentration of power. After the London collections were complete Hickin and his assistants quietly returned to Manchester. Although the London office remained nominally the League headquarters until 1846, the control, advice, and instructions all emanated from Manchester.<sup>1</sup>

The opening session of Parliament in 1843 was marked by bitter animosity between free traders and conservatives; each blamed the other for the troubles of 1842. Peel was feeling the strain of the opposition attacks. Bright, hopeful of a breakthrough, wrote, "Peel is fearful and wavering. Thy attacks must be on him--give him all the responsibility--he can't long bear up under it."<sup>2</sup> Peel was also suffering from the loss of his secretary who was mistaken for the Premier and assassinated. The fifth nights debate was opened by Mark Phillips

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, pp. 139-140.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

and Milner Gibson who refuted charges against the humanity of the manufacturers and the increase of factories.

Cobden then rose to speak. The Morning Post, not given to pro-League sentiment, described the speech:

Mr. Cobden approved himself not forgetful of the tone and temper which suit the purpose of the Anti-Corn Law agitators out of doors. He hurled at the heads of country gentlemen the same taunts and charges which he has repeated, out of doors. He told them they were not agriculturists, but merely rent-owners. He told them that the Corn Laws were not to protect farmers and labourers but to raise rents. These statements may be condemned as we are disposed, most gravely to condemn them; they may be described as untrue, they may be referred to malice as their source; but they are straightforward. They are uttered in the presence of country gentlemen, who constitute, numerically, the largest party in the house; and the utterer, by consequence exposes himself to prompt retaliation of the most crushing kind. Mr. Cobden charged Mr. George Banks and the other Dorsetshire Landowners, with pauperising and brutalizing their labourers. He defied any landowner to prove that the Corn Laws could possibly protect labourers or farmers. . . . He reminded Lord Stanley of the admission which had fallen from that noble Lord, to the effect, that Corn Laws raised rents, but did not raise wages. No man answered these charges of Mr. Cobden. No man attempted to answer them. Sir Robert Peel's speech, whatever might be its merits, contained no defence of the Corn Laws on those general grounds on which Mr. Cobden assailed them. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Cobden hammered away at the responsibility of the Premier. At the conclusion of Cobden's speech Peel and Bankes both rose. There were cries for Bankes, for the House expected the gentlemen to reply to Cobden's accusations. Sir Robert Peel struck an empty box before him and finally succeeded in getting the floor. He said he regretted that

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, II, 38-39.



Cobden held him personally responsible and he would not be influenced by the threat of physical violence. Cobden rose immediately to deny he had said personally responsible but by virtue of the Premier's office; at this point the confusion and shouts from the ministerial side drown out any further comment. The next morning newspaper headlines read, "Peel accuses Cobden of assassination threat."

There was no evidence to indicate any truth in Peel's charges; the usual explanation is that Peel was so distraught over his secretary's death that Cobden's attacks were just one straw too many. The League came quickly and loudly to Cobden's defense. On February 22 an official meeting was held in the Crown and Anchor in London to support Cobden. Cobden, himself, was present and issued his official denial:

You have been told that I have been charged in my place in Parliament with instigating to assassination --I who received a diploma from the Society of Friends as a peace-maker, on account of my writing, long before I was known as a politician. I who in all shapes, to the best of my humble ability, endeavored to depress the false boast of mere animal power at the expense of immortal part of our being: I, who abhor capital punishments: I, who am conscientiously of opinion that it is worse than useless to take life, even for the punishment of murder: I have been accused of instigating to assassination. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Cobden told of his disaffection with bad laws, but rather than using pistols and bayonets he found printing presses and lecturers more effective. Once people were

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, February 28, 1843.

satisfied with the inequitous operation of this law, they would rise up and abolish it. It was only with the cooperation of the middle classes, Cobden continued, that the Corn Laws would be repealed. Bright noted that since so many people were active in running the League down, he thought it might be useful to look at the character of the people who were active in running others down; he then examined the aristocracy and their paid press. Hume, Bowring, and Milner Gibson, all members of Parliament, spoke of the integrity of Cobden and of the League.

The following evening, February 23, Wilson called an extraordinary general meeting of the League for the Free Trade Hall, Manchester to repudiate charges made in the House against the League and against Cobden. Some 10,000 were present. Wilson began by explaining the purpose of the meeting and summing up the newspaper reports and reactions. Henry Ashaorth, in an emotional eulogy of Cobden's ability as a friend of reform, moved:

That this meeting having learnt that in the two houses of Parliament the Anti-Corn Law League has been charged with encouraging or countenancing the employment of personal violence, in order to obtain the repeal of the Corn Laws, feels called upon to repel so unjust and groundless an insinuation, and especially to declare the indignation with which it views the attempt to misinterpret the expressions used by the hon. member for Stockport during the recent debate on the suffering state of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Benjamin Pearson moved the following to support the

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, February 29, 1843.

speeches and writings of Cobden:

That whilst this meeting has witnessed on all occasions when the hon. member for Stockport has advocated the repeal of the Corn Laws, that he has evinced a stern regard for justice, and for the real welfare of his country, it has been a source of peculiar satisfaction to observe that he has always in his writings and speeches, maintained the importance and benefits of free trade in a spirit consistent with the principles of the constitution, the laws of the land, and the precepts of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Bright, who had traveled all night from London to be in Manchester for this meeting, deplored that they must meet at all on this occasion. He noted that their enemies had tried to suppress then slander the League and that they now tried an attack on their leader. He then moved that:

In consequence of the attempts to throw odium on the character of Mr. Cobden, this meeting, feels called upon to express its fullest approbation of that honorable gentleman's conduct in the cause of justice and humanity, and, whilst tendering to him its sincere thanks for his unwearied labours and eminent services, this meeting pledges itself to give to him and his excellent parliamentary coadjutors its best assistance and support, and to persevere in employing all just and constitutional means for the total repeal of those laws, which, limiting the food of the people, are opposed, not only to the best interests of our fellow-men, but to the benevolent designs of Divine Providence. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Brooks, with his usual anecdote, spoke to the third resolution. Before the meeting closed, Wilson suggested that all who supported Cobden should prepare an address to him. The League papers for the following months are full of reports of the various towns in the country which sent

<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, February 29, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., September 28, 1843.

lengthy petitions to Cobden. Stockport rallied all of Cobden's former supporters and many of his former enemies to sign a petition approving of the conduct of their Member.

The London agitation was carried on in earnest with seven weekly meetings held between March 15 and May 3 at the Drury Lane Theatre.<sup>1</sup> On March 15 admission was by ticket only. Ewart, the first speaker, remarked that he though he would follow the actor's tradition and keep his speech, the prologue, short; he then talked of Cobden's invitation to the members of the House to come and observe the proceedings of the League. Cobden began:

I am told that in London there is a taste for that which borders on personality in politics . . . if we give our attention to great principles, we shall find in the end that we shall have greater influence to advocate those principles the less we indulge in personalities.<sup>2</sup>

He then refuted the personal attack which had been made on the League in the Lords. Bright established a relationship between food prices and the Corn Laws; he carried on a question and answer dialogue with the audience and proclaimed his faith in the longevity of the people.

James Wilson began the March 29 weekly meeting at Drury Lane with an explanation of the theories of supply and demand as they affected the operation of the Corn

<sup>1</sup>For the original five nights the League paid £300.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, March 21, 1843.

Laws. The next speaker, new to the London agitation, was the Reverend W. J. Fox, a former Unitarian minister and prolific reform writer and speaker. Fox received a resounding ovation, attesting to his popularity with the London audiences. He told the people that there were no new arguments against the Corn Laws because it was action and not speech that was required. He called upon the audience to pledge themselves to repeal as they would to a religious covenant. Cobden concluded the meeting with a speech concentrating on the benefits of free trade especially to the middle class.

After an Easter suspension, the League resumed weekly meetings on April 26. Wilson announced that the League had completed the delivery of packets of tracts to all the electors in one hundred and fifty-one boroughs and twenty-three counties and that Bright and Moore had just returned from a tour to Plymouth, Devonport, Tavistock, Liskeard, Sheffield, and Macclesfield. Villiers announced he would bring forward his motion on May 9 at which time the delegates from the League would assemble as usual in London. On May 3 Wilson announced that the present meeting would be the last to be held in the Drury Lane Theatre as the owners had decided that it was not to be let further for political purposes.

The lecturers spent the spring of 1843 in advance work for League deputation meetings and occasional

informative lectures. On January 17 Hickin reported that Falvey, Paulton, Saul, Buckingham, and Moore had been dispatched to London; Finnigan to Shrewsbury; Griffiths to North Wales; and Jenkins to South Wales. Murray was in Gloucestershire. Acland was the most active of the lecturers; he was dispatched to Scotland for the first four months of 1843. In ninety-one working days he averaged ten lectures for every thirteen working days for the entire four month period. The Circular of May 9 gave a long list of the towns he visited during this time. In March Falvey lectured at the theatre in Huntingdon without incident; in April he joined Paulton at the Corn Exchange in Cambridge. Falvey gave several lectures in Cambridge at the White Bear Inn before Paulton arrived and both apparently paved the way for a meeting of the League deputation. On the seventeenth of May Falvey reported that an Anti-Corn Law Society had been formed at Cambridge with two hundred fifty members. Buckingham remained in London throughout the spring of 1842. Daniel Liddell kept up a busy schedule of lecturing in his district; he was not called into headquarters nor to London to help with special League campaigns. Saul apparently worked out of London.

On May 9 Villiers brought forward the motion, "that this House resolve itself into a committee, for the purpose of considering the duties affecting the importation of

foreign corn, with a view to their immediate abolition."<sup>1</sup> On Monday the 16th, on the fifth night's debate, Cobden gave a major speech. He pointedly asked his peers, whether they had the right to keep a law which had for its object the infliction of scarcity on the people. The division was one hundred twenty-five for the motion and three hundred eighty-one against. During the debates the anti-Corn Law delegates from the various associations had met in London at Herbert's Hotel and the King's Arms Tavern. The League also held a number of large mass meetings in London during May to help publicize the agitation.

During April and May Bright and Moore made several tours of the country collecting money and gathering support of the electors for repeal. They spoke at Plymouth, Davenport, Kiskeard, Wakefield, Macclesfield, High Wycombe, and Dorchester.

A unique feature of the agitation of 1843 was the consistent effort of the League to turn the English farmer away from his belief in protection to support the repeal of the Corn Laws. Cobden concentrated his attacks in an attempt to prove the Corn Laws were injurious to agriculture, they gave no real protection, they failed utterly in their aim of guaranteeing a certain price level, and they were generally used by the landlords as a snare to keep the tenant farmer from his real grievances of the

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, II, 74.

Game Laws and the need for long leases. The most striking feature of the agitation aimed at the farmer was the holding of large open air county meetings where Cobden, Bright, and Moore met all comers in a hostile environment.

One of the first forays of the League into agricultural country was a meeting at the Assize Hall, Taunton, Somersetshire, on April 8, 1843. Some eight hundred were present. Cobden spoke first, telling his audience that he came to see good not evil; he reviewed the history of the Corn Laws from 1815 to 1842, summarizing with the statement that when trade flourished the farmer got a higher price for his produce. He spoke of the farmer's sons needing jobs as he, himself one of eleven farmer's sons, could not stay on the farm but was forced to go into business. Ashworth's recollection of the meeting was:

Cobden was met by cool respect, it was plainly visible upon their faces that the audience was doubtful. Every remark was well weighed and gradually the icy-coldness and suspicion pictured on the upturned faces disappeared as Cobden unfolded his subject. At last his statements were confirmed by a timid 'hear, hear' but these expressions grew robust, and were ultimately uttered with strong emphasis. Mr. Bright rose next and he drove home the facts so well that enthusiasm pervaded the meeting and found vent in cheers, and at last the audience seemed to be thoroughly in favour of the principles of the League  
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Bright and Moore both spoke of the necessity of the non-intervention of some men with the industry of others. The

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<sup>1</sup>Ashworth, pp. 143-144.



League victory at Taunton was not in converting the farmer, but rather in gaining a hearing for repeal arguments in the center of agricultural protection.

Cobden ventured alone to meet some 2,000 in the plough mead at Hertford. He began by saying that he came to them as a perfect stranger, depending solely on the justice of his cause and the strength of his argument:

the consciousness of which emboldened him to stand before a tribunal with twenty-five years of prejudice arrayed against him and upon the verdict of men taught to be enemies to stake the fate of the Corn Laws.<sup>1</sup>

He concluded his two hour speech by advising the farmers to advocate repeal as the only means of securing steadiness of price and remunerative profit. Lattimore, a tenant farmer, proposed a repeal amendment which was subsequently carried.

On April 29 Bright and Moore went to the cattle market, Cambridge to address the farmers on the evil effects of the Corn Laws in relation to agriculture. With Lord Nugent in the chair Cobden and Moore spoke to some 1,200 farmers in the county hall, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire; it had been announced that Dr. Sleigh, a pro-Corn Law lecturer, would be there to oppose the free traders but he did not make his appearance. At the public rooms in Uxbridge on May 17 the League deputation again met some 1,000 farmers. Cobden announced he would confine himself

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, May 2, 1843.

to the influence of the Corn Laws upon the interests of the tenant farmer; he showed how the Corn Laws were more injurious to the farmer and farm laborer than to any other class in the community. Wood, a local landowner, called for gradual not sudden changes in the Corn Laws; he felt that immediate repeal would result in sudden withdrawal of capital from the land. Hume, M. P., spoke generally in favor of free trade. Bing rose to oppose total repeal and plead for a moderate fixed duty. Pownall argued that the price of corn had not fluctuated more than that of other articles and he attributed the distress in the manufacturing districts to the manufacturers who gave too little of the profits to the workers. Houghton, a farmer, argued that any change would prejudice the farmer. Cobden spent several minutes in reply to the fixed duty and no repeal gentlemen. A resolution for total repeal was then passed by the majority of the meeting.

Bright, Cobden, and Moore ventured to talk to the farmers at the Sheep Market, Lincoln, on May 19. Prentice described the meeting:

This meeting like all the others in the agricultural districts had been advertised and placarded for three weeks previously throughout the county, so that it might in the strictest sense of the word be called a county meeting. It was attended by many farmers and others from a distance of nearly thirty miles. . . . At 3 o'clock, the appointed hour of meeting, upwards of 3,000 persons assembled round the commodious hustings which had been constructed for the occasion, and which was crowded with the more influential persons of the city and neighborhood. As Mr. Cobden had been detained in town by his Parliamentary

duties the evening previous, he arrived at half past three only. Mr. Bright opened the proceedings with a long and able address, which was followed by Mr. Cobden. . . . The audience, which was at first cautious and doubtful, gradually threw away its reserve, and warmed into enthusiasm as the speakers enfolded their views of the question, and at the conclusion of their speeches it was quite evident which way the auditory would go. . . .<sup>1</sup>

On June 3 at Bedford the League moved into even more hostile Tory country:

The farmers for miles around had been canvassed by influential agriculturists and landholders, and entreated to attend for the purpose of putting down the representatives of the Anti-Corn Law League.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Charles Russell took the chair. In a total of six hours Cobden lectured, Pym came out for protection, Bennett gave a violently anti-League speech, Metcalfe moved an amendment favorable to the League, Lattimore seconded and Moore spoke to the amendment. When the final division came, the free traders had a majority of about two to one. The League was exultant over the results for as Moore reported to Wilson:

our Bedford meeting was a hard battle and a glorious triumph neither Cobden nor I expected to win, throughout the whole time the cheering was left in the hands of a very few. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Cobden and Moore continued to a meeting at the cattle market, Rye, Sussex on June 10. Placards had been posted telling the farmers to be wary and not be misled by

<sup>1</sup>Prentice, II, 94-95.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, June 13, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>June 8, 1843.

Cobden who, although he claimed to be the son of a Sussex farmer, was really a manufacturer and a member of the League. Cobden stuck strictly to his theme that the Corn Laws were more injurious to the tenant farmer than to any other class. Moore talked of the injustice done to the manufacturing operatives who were ready to produce articles in exchange for food. A Major Curteis, a practical farmer, thought that immediate repeal would result in two-thirds of the farmers being forced to leave their lands. H. B. Curteis, M. P., said the English farmer should be protected. Cobden was challenged to move a total repeal resolution which he did, then Major Curteis moved an amendment that a fixed duty was more desirable. The original motion was carried.

On June 17 the League hoped to gain revenge in Huntington for the rough treatment dealt out to their lecturers in the early years of the agitation. Cobden was advertised as the speaker but he was too ill to attend. Bright and Moore spoke to some 3,000 farmers and squires in this Tory borough. Bright began by asserting that the Corn Law was a rent law. The audience immediately disavowed this and Bright seemed lost for further proof. J. Rust then moved a protectionist resolution; Moore spoke in a lengthened argument for total repeal amid much opposition from the Corn Law party. After several additional short speeches the chairman called for a division of hands

which was in favor of protection. As with all League failures, there was little evidence available to determine who caused it or why it happened. There was some indication that Bright simply lacked the facts or the knowledge to answer the objections from the audience.

Cobden was well enough to join the deputation which met 3,000 farmers on Pendenden Heath in Maidstone on June 29. Cobden began with his usual argument of the effect of the Corn Laws on the farmers. A Captain Atcherley spoke for some time but to what point the audience could not tell. He was followed by J. Osborne an influential landowner who favored protection. Villiers reminded the meeting that in the twenty-seven years of the Corn Laws the promised prices had never been realized. Colonel Thompson told the audience that as a landowner he favored repeal. A total and immediate resolution was carried.

The League's new electoral campaign swung into high gear during the spring and summer of 1843. Besides Sidney Smith and Moore the Council hired several additional barristers to superintend the work of clearing the names of free traders and of objecting to conservative protectionists. In July, 1843, the League leaders went out into the counties. Bright and Moore stopped at Norwich, Sunderland, Newcastle, Winchester, and Durham.

The League agricultural meetings continued during July, 1843. Cobden, Bright, and Robert Owen spoke to

2,000 in the open air near the Corn Exchange in Winchester. The League and the protectionists met at the conservative stronghold of Colchester on July 8. The local agricultural association had organized their forces against the meeting; the clergy had canvassed the county in behalf of the Corn Laws, the price of which measured their income. The League, unable to obtain the use of a meadow most often used for large county meetings, built a special hustings in a field near East Bridge, Colchester. Cobden told the audience how the Corn Laws affected the agricultural interests of the country. It had been said that the League came to take something away from the tenant farmers, but Cobden denied they had protection under the present system. Sir John Tyrrell then rose and proposed a Corn Law amendment and without the assistance of the chairman took a vote on his amendment, but when only one-third of the meeting voted with him he withdrew his amendment. In a style apparent in most of the agricultural meetings, Moore constantly interrupted Tyrrell. Cobden accepted Tyrrell's dare to meet on an open platform at Chelmsford on July 28. Villiers said a few words. Sir John Ferrand, M. P., began to speak for protection but there was so much noise he quit until Harbottle, a Leaguer, obtained enough quiet for Ferrand to continue. Moore rose and a portion of the audience cried, "no paid men." Harbottle again rose to explain that Moore was a

barrister and had not received a cent from the League. Then cries of "division" went up. Finally at 9 P.M., some six hours after the beginning of the meeting, of the 2,000 still remaining, only twenty-seven hands were held up against repeal.

On July 28 a large crowd gathered at a specially built hustings at the back of the Bell Inn at Chelmsford, Essex, an anticipation of the challenged discussion between Sir John Tyrrell and Cobden. Cobden and Moore both spoke; a Mr. Holt briefly talked of the necessity for protection, but there was no sign of Sir John. The League exulted over this victory by default and received much publicity from it.

In July, 1843, Bright won election to represent Durham. McCord disavowed the League claim that this was a great free trade victory and suggested that the shift of the Londonderry interest to Bright when the Marquess quarreled with the Tory leadership between the first and the second election was the determining factor. The League, nevertheless, claimed a great victory with Bright's election.

During the summer of 1843 the League decided its newspaper campaign was inadequate. The Council considered expanding the Circular in order that it might appeal to more segments of the population and the Council considered starting all over again and beginning a new free trade

paper. Finally the League decided to support James Wilson who began a new paper aimed at the business and financial community which would have no open connection with the League. Thus the League was able to reach a large segment of the people who would not read anything directly published by it. The extent of the League support of this venture and the circulation of the Economist, as the new paper was called, can be seen from a letter Cobden wrote to Wilson:

[The League Council] voted unanimously (trusting to a bill of indemnity) to take 20,000 copies of the Economist--the price to be the same as if it were printed in close pamphlet form (the difference to be a donation from the proprietors of the Economist). We are strongly of opinion that you cannot do better than arrange a systematic plan for distributing these papers in the following manner viz.

A copy to all the leading tories in Manchester & the neighborhood--say 2000 copies.

A copy to each of the electors in Wigan, Blackburn, Warrington, Clithero, Lancaster. Copies to the leading tories in Ashton, Stockport, Bolton, Preston, Salford, Oldham. Copies to as many tories as possible in the county not being resident in any of the boroughs.

A few thousand should be sent to Liverpool unless the Anti-Monopoly Secy. there should be prepared to purchase some for distribution.

We think you will agree with us that this is a judicious plan, & that you will give directions for their systematic distribution.<sup>1</sup>

The League also decided to enlarge the Circular and to remove its publication to London where Paulton took over as editor. The name was changed to the League and the paper was printed weekly.

Cobden continued his agricultural forays during

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<sup>1</sup>August 24, 1843.



August. On August 5, he and Moore met the farmers of Bury St. Edmonds at Angel Hill. The mayor had said that a League meeting would not take place within the precincts of his borough, but he was not able to make good his threats and Cobden and Moore carried a free trade resolution. Bright and Cobden joined to defeat the protectionists in the tory borough of Salisbury on August 8. Moore was loudly called for by the people but Cobden explained he was too ill to attend. The League announced a meeting for the Corn Exchange, Canterbury. Some three to four hundred landowners, farmers, and other members of the East Kent Agricultural Association met to consider whether it was proper to discuss the question of the Corn Laws with so dangerous a man as Mr. Cobden.<sup>1</sup> Although the Agricultural Association passed a resolution against Bright and Cobden speaking, the two Leaguers mounted the platform at four o'clock. The Corn Exchange was too small so the meeting was moved to the cattle market. Bright spoke to the proposition that the Corn Laws had been more destructive to the interests of the tenant farmer than to any other class; he talked of the evil effects of protective duties upon agriculture. Cobden followed with a lengthy address embracing the usual topics. Webb, a Chartist, asked several questions but a free trade resolution was passed by three thousand in the audience.

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, August 16, 1843.

The final August agricultural meeting announced for the town hall, Reading on August 19 was a League failure. The week before the meeting the Berkshire Association for the Protection of British Agriculture canvassed the neighborhood advising the farmers to abstain from attending. Consequently on the day Moore, Bright, and Cobden arrived to hold their meeting the attendance was thin. Ashworth told of the League's plans to reach the farmers:

The League adopted a plan in this instance at once novel and excellent, to defeat the intention of the monopolists. A full report of the proceedings was published in a local paper and two copies were sent to every farmer, who, upon reference to the county register, was found to have voted in favour of a monopolist candidate at the last election.<sup>1</sup>

Thus although the Protection Association prevented the farmers from hearing the speeches of the League, the farmer was afforded an opportunity of studying the arguments in his own home.

At the end of August the League announced the suspension of the county meetings during the harvest and the Circular paused to take stalk of the progress of the agricultural meeting. Deputations from the League had visited some eighteen counties holding twenty-two county meetings. The method for most of these meetings was:

From a fortnight to three weeks notice has been given throughout the county, by advertisement in the local papers, by placards posted in all the towns and villages within twenty miles of the place of meeting, and by handbills distributed to the farmers visiting

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<sup>1</sup>Ashworth, pp. 204-205.

the principal markets. Hustings have been erected in the most convenient public place sufficiently spacious to accommodate all who desired to take a part in the proceedings, and the most influential landowner present has been always preferred for chairman. With a view to giving the widest and most correct publicity to the proceedings, able reporters have invariably accompanied the deputation from London, who have taken down the speeches verbatim, which have been printed and systematically distributed by the agents of the League throughout every parish in the county.

By these means nearly the whole of the southern division of England has been, not merely agitated, but thoroughly saturated with information, in a permanent form. In no other way could the farmers have been induced to read and discuss the pros and cons of the Corn-Law question. Parliamentary debates do not interest them, and London meetings are too far off to engage their notice; but a county meeting, held in the principal market town, and called by placard, is the topic of conversation in every circle from the castle to the cottage. In every point of view, these meetings are of the utmost importance, and although the expense and labour of continuing them will be doubtless considerable, we trust the League will be enabled to extend their new system of operations into every corner of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

At first the monopolists had not been prepared for the League invasion of their time-honored strongholds. The League meetings at Norwich, Taunton, and Hertford went off with little opposition. Then a struggle ensued at Bedford with the League winning and at Huntington with the monopolists winning. Sir John Tyrrell was defeated in his home county. From this time the Protectionists began to organize. They forbade their tenants to attend League meetings which because of the short leases and other economic factors was their most effective tactic. The League countered with the method described for the Reading

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, August 29, 1845.

encounter; the printing and delivery of the speeches to each elector. The Circular gave a subtle index of the degree of success the League achieved in a meeting. Of meetings where there was no doubt as to the outcome and where there was little opposition, the Circular printed only excerpts of speeches. Of meetings where the League fought hard and hopefully won, the full speeches of the League speakers and only cursory sentence paraphrases of the opposition speeches were printed. Of meetings where the farmers were present in very small numbers, a full version of all speeches were printed.

The League commenced its fall, 1843, operations with a huge rally at Covent Garden Theatre on September 28. Wilson opened the session by noting that this theatre held from seven hundred to eight hundred more people than the other thus he felt the owners of the other theatre had done the League a favor in refusing its rental. The aim of the meeting was to give the friends of free trade an account of the proceedings of the League during the summer and an account of the disposition of the national fund. Paulton then read the annual report which contained the following items:

During a very considerable portion of the year there were employed in the printing and making up of the Electoral packets of Tracts upwards of 300 persons, while more than 500 other persons were employed in distributing them from house to house among the constituencies. To the Parliamentary electors of England and Scotland there have been distributed in this manner of tracts and stamped publications

5,000,000. . . .

Besides these, there has been a large general distribution among the working classes and others, who are not electors, to the number of 3,600,000. In addition, 426,000 tracts have been stitched up with the monthly magazines and other periodicals, thus making altogether, the whole number of tracts and stamped publications issued by the Council during the year, to amount to 9,026,000, or in weight upwards of one hundred tons. . . .

The distribution of tracts has been made in twenty-four counties, containing about 237,000 electors, making in boroughs and counties together, the whole number of electors supplied 496,226. There are twenty-three boroughs and forty-seven counties in Great Britain in which the distribution has yet to be made.

The number of lecturers employed during the year has been 14; their time has been chiefly devoted to the giving of lectures; but occasionally they have superintended the distribution of the Electoral Packets, and assisted in the Parliamentary and League Registration. Their labours have been spread over fifty-nine counties in England, Wales, and Scotland, and they have delivered about 650 lectures during the year.

A large number of meetings have been held during the year in the cities and boroughs, which have been attended by deputations of members of the Council. Exclusive of the metropolis, 140 towns have been thus visited, many of them twice and three times. . . .

[There have been twenty-five meetings in the agricultural areas]. . . .

The Council cannot pass over, without notice, the great meetings of the League held during the week commencing on the 30th of January last, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. . . .

A series of weekly meetings was held in London, commencing on the 22nd of February, and continuing until the 10th of May. . . .

The League Fund. Total amount of Subscription received £50,290 14s. Total Expenditure £47,814 3s. 9d. Balance of cash on hand, September 9th, 1843, £2,476 10s. 3d.<sup>1</sup>

The report on the lecturers would be more accurate if the word chiefly was removed and the giving of lectures added

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<sup>1</sup>League, September 30, 1843.

to the other list of a lecturer's duties on an equal basis. The expenditure of £47,000 alone indicated the scope of the 1842-43 agitation campaign.

After the report was read and voted upon, Cobden rose to speak. He talked of rising rents and falling prices in agricultural areas; concluding with a personal testimony to the importance of renewed effort, he told the audience:

If I were not convinced that the question comprises a great moral principle and involves the great moral world's revolution that was ever accomplished for mankind, I should not take part in the agitation.<sup>1</sup>

Moore read an address of the Council to the members of the League which proposed a plan of action for the months ahead. The steps were to be consecutive. First, a copy of all registration lists in the kingdom would be obtained. Then a packet of stamped publications would be distributed to the electors before a League deputation visited every borough. Measures would be taken to ascertain the opinions of every elector in every borough; and in every constituency whose representatives had not voted for Villier's motion, the electors would be invited to memorialize their member to vote for the motion when it was next brought forward. Whenever a vacancy occurred in any borough any candidate who supported free trade would be supported by deputations, lectures, and distribution of

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<sup>1</sup>League, September 30, 1843.

publications by the League. If the borough could not find a free trade candidate of its own, the League pledged to put one forward so that the voters would have a choice. (The League never did adhere to this provision in practice although it continued on the books for the remainder of the agitation.) The address also suggested that since petitioning was doing so little for the cause it should be stopped in favor of renewed electoral effort. The collection of a £100,000 fund was announced. Bright and W. J. Fox both spoke to the address, recommending it, before it was passed unanimously by the audience.

In September the League recommenced its assault on the agricultural counties. The meeting at Oxford on September 13 was one of the hardest, yet successful, battles the League speakers fought with the protectionists. The usual practice of placarding the county was abandoned and a requisition was presented only a few days before the proposed meeting to the high-sheriff of Oxfordshire calling on him to convene a county meeting to hear Cobden. Both Lord Camoys and Mr. Langston, two of the largest landowners in the county, supported the requisition for a meeting. The day of the meeting, a placard appeared with a representation of John Bull tossing a dog labelled "Cobden, the Anti-Corn Law Agitator," over his shoulder.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Cooper the under-sheriff took the chair. Cobden,

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, September 16, 1843.

the first speaker, had spoken only a few minutes when the noise and crowded condition of the hall prompted the sheriff to move the assembly to the cattle market. Cobden outlined his usual argument that the farmers were the class most affected by the Corn Laws. The man chosen to oppose him, a Mr. Sparkhill, then rose to speak:

Sparkhill, an eccentric printer, armed himself with a large blue bag filled with elaborate treatises upon the Corn Laws, & among other pamphlets a recent no. of Punch . . . having duly arranged his books and papers, he at once commanded the serious attention of the meeting by stating broadly, as the proposition he was about to prove, that the repeal of the Corn Laws would plunge the nation into such a state of depression as must ultimately terminate in a national bankruptcy. After quoting the Rev. Baptist Noel, Mr. Gregg and other passages, the relevancy of which to his proposition no one could discover, he bewildered himself in a calculation and gladly availed himself of a slight interruption to make his bow and retire. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Even allowing for the Circular's bias, Sparkhill was a poor choice of opponent for Cobden. Lord Camoys, Langston, and Bright then talked of the necessity of repeal; Lord Norrey proposed that overproduction not the Corn Laws was the cause of the distress. Langston and Henley, both members of Parliament for Oxford, told why they could not support any lessening of the protection afforded the farmer under the Corn Laws. At seven o'clock, nearly five hours after the beginning of the meeting, a resolution supporting free trade was passed. The Manchester Guardian exulted with the League in the victory and sprang to

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, September 19, 1843.



defend Bright's statistics from the attack of the Standard.<sup>1</sup>

The League claimed the lecturers were active among all classes of society during the fall of 1843, but in fact they were much more active among the electoral population. In August Sidney Smith made an extensive tour in the southern counties visiting Shoreham, Horsham, Five Bells, Chichester, Havant, and Fareham. At a market room lecture in Chobham in September, a local attorney became so noisy in opposition to Smith that the audience put him out of the hall. During October and November Smith was busy with the London election agitation. He spent the entire month of December lecturing in the south giving some twenty-three lectures during the month. Finnigan was active in North Lancashire in October. Acland spent most of the fall in election activity for the League but completed courses of lectures in October in Macclesfield, Buxton, and Chapel-en-le-Firth. He joined Smith in the south of England in December to found free trade registration societies.

Murray met Dr. Sleight, the pro-Corn Law orator, in a much advertised debate at Wakefield on October 12. After some confusion on the part of Sleight and his friends as to which side of the room they should go to register their opposition to the free trade resolution, the

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Guardian, September 16, 1843.

chairman announced the majority in favor of Murray's proposal for repeal. Murray was at Liskeard in December. Falvey completed a heavy lecturing schedule in September at Pontefract, Thirsk, Northallerton, Knaresborough, and several other boroughs. In November and December he was at such widely separated places as Great Grimsby in Lincolnshire and Chatteris in Huntingdon and Cambridge counties. Liddell remained in Northumberland; Saul spent most of his time in London; and Jenkins continued in South Wales. On October 19 the League opened its campaign in the manufacturing districts with a large meeting of 10,000 in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Cobden gave a review of the agitation planned for the fall and Brooks entertained the audience.

In October three League Council members began a very important tour to Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and East Lothian. It was said by some writers that the A. B. and C. of the League had gone to study farming--Ashworth, Bright, and Cobden made the speaking tour. On returning Cobden told the League that the lands in Northumberland in England and East Lothian in Scotland were the best farmed in the country, that these areas have repudiated protection, and that the most skilful and extensive agriculturists in the kingdom were in the ranks of the free traders.

Toward the end of October another important

election occupied the attention of the League. With the death of Sir Matthew Wood, a vacancy occurred in the representation of London. A Mr. T. Baring ran for the conservatives while the reformers and free traders invited Mr. Pattison to become a candidate. The League worked hard for Pattison. On October 13 a large meeting was held at Covent Garden Theatre for the purpose of assisting the liberals in the city. Villiers, Cobden, Bright, and W. J. Fox all urged the election of the free trade candidate. The League of October 21 announced that during the past week meetings had been held every evening in the principal wards of the city which were addressed by Bright and by Moore. When the polls closed the numbers stood at 6,535 for Pattison and 6,334 for Baring. Parkes doubted that total repeal really won many votes for Pattison, but the League exulted in the victory as if it was their own.<sup>1</sup> A large meeting was held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester to congratulate the electors of London with Brooks, Bazley, Brotherton, and Prentice the speakers. The League's monthly aggregate meeting held in Covent Garden at the end of October was also to congratulate the electors of London on their victory. Sidney Smith, Villiers, Milner Gibson, and Moore spoke.

On November 18, 1843, an editorial in The Times, one of the League's arch enemies, described the League as

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 159.

a "great fact" and concluded that "a new power has arisen in the State." The impressive reorganization of the League propaganda machine and the announcement of a £100,000 fund had convinced The Times, not of the rightness of the League's cause, but of its scale and formidable structure.

The Times admitted:

The League is a Great Fact. It would be foolish--nay, rash to deny it importance. It is a great fact that there should have been created in the homesteads of our manufactures a confederacy devoted to the agitation of one political question, persevering at it year after year, shrinking from no trouble, dismayed by no danger, making light of every obstacle. . . . It is a great fact that at one meeting at Manchester, more than forty manufacturers should subscribe on the spot, each at least £100, some £300, some £400, some £500 for the advancement of a measure which, right or wrong, just or unjust, expedient or injurious, they at least believe it to be their duty or their interest, or both, to advance in every possible way.

These are the facts important and worthy of consideration. No moralist can disregard them; no politician can sneer at them; no statesman can undervalue them. He who collects opinions must chronicle them. He who frames laws must to some extent consult them

. . . .

A New power has arisen in the State; and maids and matrons flock to theatres, as though it were but a new 'translation from the French.'

Let no man say that we are blind to the possible mischiefs of such a state of things. We acknowledge that we dislike gregarious collections of cant and cotton men. We cannot but know that whatever be the end of this agitation, it will expire only to bequeath its violence and its turbulence to some successor.

The chief result from The Times' article was to bring out comment on the League from virtually every other metropolitan newspaper. The Morning Post, while admitting the League might be a great fact, thought that from the beginning it was the work of violent and selfish men. The

Morning Herald called on the landowners and the conservatives to come to the rescue of Peel and his cabinet. Prentice lists the single greatest benefit the League received from the editorial, aside from the tremendous free publicity engendered for the League, was that henceforth the London newspapers needed no subsidies to notice the activities of the League.<sup>1</sup>

In November the League became involved in another election contest at Salisbury where they backed Bouverie, a free trade candidate, against the conservative nominee. More evidence is available about the League speakers' involvement in this election than for any other contest. On November 2 and 3 two meetings were held simultaneously, one for electors where a ticket admitting a lady and a gentleman was sent to each elector and, the second, a meeting of some 1,000 non-electors. Moore lectured at the non-electors meeting while Cobden spoke to the electors meeting, then Moore brought a petition from the non-electors to the electors and spoke to the electors meeting while Cobden spoke to the non-electors. On November 3 some six hundred sat to tea and heard Cobden, Rawson, and Moore speak. George Wilson was in town helping with the canvass although he did not speak at any of the meetings. On November 10 the same simultaneous system of two meetings was held with Cobden and Moore the speakers. On

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, II, 138.

November 13 Moore and the Reverend Thomas Spencer spoke to simultaneous meetings. The following day Sidney Smith and Moore spoke to both groups. A tea party was held on November 15 with Moore and Bright the featured speakers. On the 16th at another simultaneous meeting arrangement Cobden, Bright, and Moore spoke in round-robbin sessions. A reporter for the League noted:

Every day reports of the speeches have been circulated. The League sent to every elector (last Saturday); the postman required a wheelbarrow to take them round but he did his work most cheerfully. . . . The non-electors have divided themselves into watch-and-ward committees each taking charge all night of a district; for the monopolists keep prowling about 'seeking whom they may devour.'<sup>1</sup>

When the polls were closed and the votes counted the League had to announce on November 23 that only a moral victory had been won for Bouverie was defeated. On November 24 the electors who had recorded their votes for Bouverie met to enroll as members of the League for the purpose of protecting themselves against injury and oppression from the monopolists. On December 1 Acland reported speaking at the formation meeting of the Salisbury Branch of the National Anti-Corn Law League. It is likely that Acland was also in Salisbury throughout the election.

The collection of the £100,000 fund was the prime focus of the League activity during the remainder of 1843.

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<sup>1</sup>November 18, 1843.

In a meeting at the town hall, Manchester to start the fund drive; £13,755 was subscribed in the room in an hour and a half. This success was repeated throughout each of the counties. The League deputation would describe the wretchedness and suffering caused by monopoly, the giving would be started by staunch Leaguers in that area then money pledges would come in from all parties interested in the repeal of the Corn Laws. Cobden, Fox, and Bright raised £2,724 at Rochdale. At Durham Ashworth, Bright, and Cobden spoke in alphabetical order to the amusement of the audience. The League listed the details of twenty-four meetings in December alone which raised enough money to warrant publicity. At Liverpool Cobden, Heyworth, and Bright raised £4,600. At Huddersfield Cobden and Moore raised £1,322. At Halifax Bright, Cobden, Moore, and Colonel Thompson raised £1,430. Throughout December the money continued to come in. There is evidence that the lecturers joined in many of the subscription campaigns; Sidney Smith, Acland, and Paulton spoke as part of League deputations.

At the end of 1843 the League agitation was in high gear. The collection of the £100,000 fund was proceeding rapidly. A plan to engage Covent Garden for fifty nights was considered even though it was known that the rent would be £3,000. Sidney Smith returned from his agitation in the southern counties full of hopes and enthusiasm from

the reception he had received. The Liverpool Association divided up their electoral districts and hoped to hold meetings in each section with lectures by John Murray.

In January, 1844, the League began an attack on the protection societies which had been formed solely to oppose the League. The Anti-League, as these societies were called, did not just spring up in 1844, but had been in existence since 1843 when the landlords first recovered from the League's successes in farming area county meetings. The appearance of a concerted campaign to refute Anti-League charges in 1844 indicated the strength the protectionist societies had gained at that time. The League announced they knew who was behind the great Anti-League meetings and asked friends to keep the League informed about the opposition. For example, for the Anti-League meeting planned for Steyning, Sussex on January 29, 1844, the League claimed that creditors were calling on debtors to sign and attend and that many who had less than ten days work a month were being drilled for the meeting.<sup>1</sup> Even the usually objective Manchester Guardian noted:

in looking over the accounts which have been published of the speeches delivered at what are called Anti-League meetings, we search in vain for anything which bears the remotest resemblance to an argument in favour of the Corn Laws. The main object of these speakers, lay and clerical, appears to be to say all

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<sup>1</sup>January 27, 1844.



manner of absurd and ill-natured things against the manufacturers and the manufacturing system. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Most of the League energy in January, 1844, was spent collecting for the £100,000 fund. Both Samuel Lloyd, the wealthiest financier in the kingdom, and Marshall of Leeds, the wealthiest manufacturer in the kingdom, were donors.<sup>2</sup> On January 1 the Marquis of Westminster wrote to Wilson enclosing a check for £500. In the five weeks ending January 20 Cobden, Bright, Moore, and Colonel Thompson visited twenty-five large towns seeking and obtaining substantial subscriptions--Todmorden £611, Bury £1,120, Oldham £850, Burney £1,000 and Bradford £2,000.

On the tenth of January Cobden, Bright, Moore, and Colonel Thompson arrived in Glasgow, Scotland to spend ten days collecting for the fund. That evening the deputation attended a banquet where some 2,000 sat to dinner in the city hall. Fox Maule, M. P., and Oswald, M. P., joined the delegation in speeches; £3,000 was raised later as a result of this meeting. On the eleventh the delegation continued to Edinburgh where with the Lord Provost in the chair Duncan McLaren joined the deputation in speeches; £1,142 was subscribed. The delegation spoke to 2,000 at the North United Secession Church, Perth on the

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<sup>1</sup>January 27, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Prentice, I, 145.

twelfth. The following day the deputation split up. Cobden and Moore went through eastern Scotland visiting Aberdeen, Dundee, Cupar, Fife, Leith, Forfar, and Jedburgh. Bright and Colonel Thompson went west to Greenlock, Paisley, Ayr, Kilmarnock, and Dumfries.

Returning from Scotland the deputation visited a series of towns in the north counties. On the twenty-third Cobden and Moore spoke at Sunderland; on the twenty-fourth Colonel Thompson and Moore were at Tynemouth while Bright and Cobden spoke at Sheffield. On the twenty-sixth Cobden, Colonel Thompson, and Bright spoke at Hull; and on the twenty-ninth at Blackburn. While the deputation was in Scotland, Wilson chaired a large meeting of the League in Manchester. Brotherton spoke on the lack of results the Corn Laws had achieved; Milner Gibson maintained that the agricultural interests had no right to control commerce. Mark Philips told of his year's illness but emphasized he had now returned to help the League; he analyzed the importance of the agricultural meetings. Brooks moved the vote of thanks observing that from the number of constituents the above gentlemen represented, their votes should each count twenty-four in the House.

On January 25 Wilson went to London to chair the first big rally of the year at Covent Garden. In a lengthy introductory speech, Wilson read the names of the towns who had contributed and the amounts they had given.

He reviewed the opposition press which, he claimed, did such things as report five hundred present at a monopolist Colchester meeting while a League farmer counted only one hundred eighty-six including fourteen reporters. He publicly announced that the League would not disturb the protectionist meetings but would refute their arguments in the League and send a copy of that newspaper to every elector in the affected district. Bouverie, the late candidate for Salisbury, spoke of the trend of history which pointed to repeal. W. J. Fox talked of the single guiding principle of the League and how in the past men who were not willing to compromise their principles had accomplished much for their nations; he concluded with a plea for brotherhood for all men. Milner Gibson assured the audience that the men who wanted repeal also wanted the legislature to withdraw all forms of protection. The Reverend J. Burnet of Camberwell called on the Anti-League to meet in Covent Garden and tell the people their case; he told the protectionists they were afraid and exhorted the League to greater efforts.

During February, 1844, the League gained two victories over the monopolists. The first was a victory only in the sense the protectionists defeated themselves. At a Somerset County meeting called for Bridgwater on February 16 with no deputation from the League present, the monopolists tried an open county meeting. William

Beadon, a farmer from nearby Taunton and a Leaguer, led the free trade opposition. The final vote was four to one for free trade. The second victory was a meeting called for the Shire Hall, Gloucester to hear Cobden. One month prior to the meeting a requisition from one hundred fifty of the leading landowners, two peers, six members of Parliament, twenty magistrates, and several practical agriculturists was presented to the high-sheriff asking him to call a county meeting to hear Cobden. He refused. Thus Lords Ducie and Radnor took it upon themselves to call a county meeting. The Anti-League made great efforts to keep the farmers away although as one man observed, "it would do no harm to hear what the great Parliament men had to say on free trade in corn."<sup>1</sup> Earl Ducie took the chair. For two hours Cobden explained the meaning of the Corn Laws to the farmers and the relationship of the price of land and the price of corn; he concluded by cautioning the farmers to examine the matter for themselves. Edward Holland moved a resolution that protection duties were injurious to commerce and to agriculture. Josiah Hunt of Almondsbury, a tenant farmer, seconded the motion which passed. Colonel Thompson and Moore acknowledged the thanks of the group for Cobden's speech.

The large meetings to publicize the agitation and excite the people were continued at Covent Garden. The

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<sup>1</sup>League, March 2, 1844.

first meeting was held on February 1 when Wilson reported that the League deputations were now in the northern boroughs collecting for the fund but that they would systematically work through all the boroughs organizing the fund collections. Cobden had talked to the farmers in twenty-eight counties. Bowring left the House to come to speak briefly on the Ministers' position on the Corn Laws. Colonel Thompson, who had just returned with Bright and Moore from a provincial tour, talked of the popular acceptance they had received in the northern counties. Bright then gave his account of the towns they visited and the reception they received. There were loud calls for Fox and Moore but Wilson announced that the time would not permit additional speakers.

The February 21 meeting at Covent Garden was one of the most popular; some six thousand gained admittance to the theatre and another 30,000 applications for tickets were refused. George Wilson took the chair. James Wilson, the first speaker, was interrupted several times by the audience expecting the arrival of the evening's most popular speaker, Daniel O'Connell. On his arrival O'Connell was cheered for ten minutes before James Wilson could obtain sufficient quiet to finish his speech. O'Connell then rose to tell the audience that he had always been a strong supporter of the League. He told of representing 750,000 farmers of Cork in Parliament and

since he had no means of buying their votes, he suspected they supported his adhesion to the Anti-Corn Law League.

He spoke of the effect of the Corn Laws on Ireland.

George Thompson, in the first speech since he returned from India, contrasted the condition of the League of 1843 with the progress in public opinion he saw now in 1844.

O'Connell then left amidst great cheering to return for a division in the House. Moore briefly explained the electoral campaign in the districts.

The March 20 Covent Garden meeting introduced a new type of speaker to the audience. The Earl of Radnor told the people that he took the chair in order that he could publicly show his support of free trade. He thought if the government would promote the interests of the manufacturers, they would increase the comfort and enjoyment of all classes. Lattimore, a tenant farmer, then rose to speak. He told the audience he was a farmer by choice and he felt that monopoly was inflicting injury on the farmers. He contended that repeal would result in an increase in employment and that the Corn Laws were not repealed because of a political interest which had no economic base and thus did not concern the farmer. Josiah Hunt, also a tenant farmer, explained that he saw agriculture and commerce as a pair of scissors. He spent much of his speech refuting mistaken notions about agriculture and told the League they should employ the practical farmers

in the cause. Cobden rose to remark, "You will see why I was refused a Parliamentary committee to inquire into the condition of the tenant farmer." He told of a visit to Lattimore's farm which produced one-third more crops than was ordinarily raised upon the same acreage in his parish. The meeting ended with Cobden serving as fugleman for three cheers for Radnor. Lattimore and Hunt were authentic tenant farmers who had large acreages, who owned their own equipment and some of their land to the extent that they could support the League without fear of reprisal. They probably had been helped with their speeches, but their appearance was the first of a long line of tenant farmers who came forward to speak at Covent Garden in favor of free trade.

In April the League decided to contest the vacancy at Exeter. General Briggs, the free trade candidate, was aided by speeches from George Thompson, Moore, Saul, and James Brotherton during the nine days of campaigning. At the close of the poll Briggs received only five hundred twenty-nine votes to lose to a Whig; the League had not been able to unite the anti-Corn Law sentiment of both Whig and Liberal parties. Moore spoke to nine of the ten free trade meetings and became a local favorite because of what his audience called "his fervid eloquence."<sup>1</sup> When he was ready to leave Exeter some 2,000 people assembled to

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<sup>1</sup>League, April 27, 1844.

see him off, pressing around his coach then giving three cheers for repeal.

The League found that the pledge made in 1843 to put forth a free trade candidate for all vacancies was not feasible. Cobden wrote to Wilson:

We are in a most awkward predicament with the approaching vacancies--We can't find candidates--that's certain--and our only course is to let some of them go by default, & get out of the dilemma afterwards with the best excuse in our power. . . . I have written to Acland to desire that he will not nominate any person without previous directions from the Manchr. Council, and I have told him not to promise a candidate beyond the general pledge we have (perhaps unwisely) given. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Earlier in April, 1844, Cobden wrote to Wilson about the policy he thought League speakers should adopt in respect to accepting speaking invitations:

Bright and myself particularly will not visit any places except Boroughs which may be possibly won and that we do not leave them without an official organization for registration purposes--if there be any exceptions to this rule it must only be where money is in the question as at Wolverhampton. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Cobden's subsequent acceptance of engagements indicate that Bristol, Greenwich, Uxbridge, and Liverpool fit his requirements.

Colonel Thompson and T. Flint of the Leeds Anti-Monopoly Association made a speaking tour of several farming areas in March and April, 1844. At Hartlepool the gas lights were extinguished as soon as the Colonel got up to

<sup>1</sup>April, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>April 2, 1844.



speaking but he continued by light of a fire in the room until the gas could be relighted. Flint and Thompson continued to Middlebro, Stockton, Selby, Richmond, Whitby, Pontefract, and Barnard Castle. On March 26 Colonel Thompson, Flint, and Prentice arrived at Thirst to address the farmers. At the time announced Colonel Thompson mounted a wagon in the yard of the inn and began his speech. Sir Thomas Crompton, former M. P. for Thirst, wheeled his wagon into the inn yard opposite the League wagon and began speaking. In indignant terms, Colonel Thompson expressed his opinion of the uncourteousness and unfairness of the conduct of Crompton. The Colonel threatened not to speak but to appeal to the public through the press and to state that he was prevented from speaking by brute force. The last threat brought the opposition to a compromise. Colonel Thompson continued his speech from the window of the inn, then Crompton spoke briefly until he was hooted down.

At Wolverhampton in a specially built pavilion erected in Howley Field on April 8, a special League meeting was held in honor of the contribution of Villiers to free trade and incidentally to appeal for subscriptions. Villiers, Cobden, and Thorneley spoke; Moore detailed the progress of the League then appealed for support. Some £800 was subscribed.

On May 11 the Council announced the League would

contest the vacancy just created in South Lancashire. William Brown, a merchant from Liverpool, was to be the free trade candidate. The protectionists and the League were soon locked in perhaps the fiercest election battle the League fought. Evidence indicated that Wilson and Cobden organized most of Brown's campaign.<sup>1</sup> The Earl of Derby placed the annual rent day for the manor of Bury on the polling days of the election in his gesture to defeat Brown. Many of the large landowners campaigned for Entwisle, the conservative candidate. Cobden toured with Brown speaking at each meeting. Falvey was brought in to speak in the farming areas of Pendlebury, Blackley, Warrington, and Newton. Acland was active during the campaign, speaking, for example, at Pendleton to a large gathering of Brown's friends. Moore also made a tour in Brown's behalf speaking, for example, to the free holders at Lamberhead Green. On May 14 a large meeting of free trade electors of the Manchester district met to support Brown; Wilson chaired the meeting while Cobden, Alderman Kershaw, and Moore spoke. When the final poll was counted, Entwisle defeated Brown. Liverpool, Manchester, Bury, Oldham, and Rochdale had voted solidly for Brown but some 4,000 tenants-at-will from the farming areas of Newton, Bolton, Ormskirk, and Wigan voted overwhelmingly for Entwisle. The League cry was that the tenants-at-will had

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<sup>1</sup>League, May-June, 1844.

been told to vote for the conservative.

The reaction to the League defeat in the press was nothing short of sensational. The League of June 1 had to admit, "the monopolists journals are crowing--ye gods! how they are crowing over the South Lancashire election." The Times, while exulting in the defeat, did give the League credit for combining the support of both Whig and Tory free traders behind Brown. The Morning Herald proclaimed the League dead because of the loss. However deeply the League felt the loss, they put on a brave front. On the voting days, Bright, Cobden, Henry Ashworth, Sir Thomas Potter, Moore, and Brotherton all gathered at Brown's headquarters to console him and to speak to his supporters.

On the day following the election, showing that the Tories in spite of Entwisle's return were not quite sure of victory, the following placard appeared in Manchester streets:

Conservative Electors of South Lancashire--  
Register, Register, Register

'The Great Battle of the constitution must be fought in the registration courts,' Sir Robert Peel. Many parties having been disappointed in their wishes to support Mr. Entwisle, the successful candidate, against the League in consequence of having omitted to register, notice is hereby given that Mr. Caistor will sit daily at the committee rooms, 6 Spring Gardens, for the next seven days between the hours of three and five o'clock in the afternoon, for the purpose of filling up claims to be placed on the new register.<sup>1</sup>

The challenge to the League to continue the battle in the

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Times, June 1, 1844.

registration courts was taken up immediately and before the end of the year the League made South Lancashire safe for a free trader should an election occur.

Some of the lecturers spent more time giving speeches during the spring of 1844 than they had the previous year. Murray began 1844 with a lecture at North Tooteth where a Dr. Harbord was nominated to the chair but instead of accepting he preferred to interrupt Murray with questions attacking the character of the League leaders. The meeting voted for repeal but Murray could not finish the lecture because of the disturbances. Murray continued to Tunstall and Burslem in March and to Southport and Ormskirk in June. Astonished at his favorable reception at Northampton, Murray wrote to Wilson:

The Council of the Chartist body came early with their troops last night and took up a front position the pencils and paper proclaiming their purpose and their pleasant looks the easy victory they anticipated --the meeting was full and a few friends stood in the background not one offered to accompany me to the platform so frightened were they of the result.

I was treated with the usual amount of courtesy, no interruptions, no questions, no contradictions, no attempt at reply but an application for a copy of statistical facts with which of course I was happy to comply and for the first time in free trade and political annals of modern Northampton, a lecturer commenced and concluded his address unquestioned. The free traders present expressed their appreciation in rather warm terms.<sup>1</sup>

On Saturday, April 13 Acland met Dr. Sleight of the Agricultural Protection Society in discussion before some

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<sup>1</sup>August 1, 1844.

1,000 persons at the Huntington Literary Institution. The setting was simple: a table was placed in the middle of the platform for the two chairmen and a seat for Mayor Dennis Herbert, the umpire; on the left was a table for Acland and on the right a table for Sleigh; the remainder of the platform was occupied by gentlemen who were admitted by tickets. As Acland arrived he went over to Sleigh and shook hands; this action immediately elicited much applause. At four o'clock Sleigh began a one hour speech; Acland then spoke for the same period. From six to eight o'clock the speakers took turns for half-hour periods; at eight o'clock each speaker had a quarter of an hour summary speech. At eight-thirty the chairman called on all those in favor of Dr. Sleigh's assertion to hold up both hands. The chairman declared a three to one majority in favor of Dr. Sleigh failing to maintain his assertion and the meeting broke up.

With the conclusion of the contest in South Lancashire, the leaders of the League Council returned to London for the Covent Garden meeting of May 29. The Earl of Ducie predicted that in the end, the people, not the government, would demand the repeal of the Corn Laws. Colonel Thompson, in a short speech, admonished that they should not let the misfortune in South Lancashire dim their spirits. Edward Holland of Dumbleton spoke briefly then Cobden rose to give the official League version of

the South Lancashire defeat. He told the audience he came not to talk of losses but of a "great moral triumph." The League, if it gained nothing else, now knew who its friends were and that they had 6,972 free traders in South Lancashire. He told of the aristocratic influence with their tenants and analyzed several districts and the electoral influences at work in each. Bright was loudly called for; he came forward and, in a short speech, explained why he did not feel defeated.

In June, 1844, Cobden plus the other Leaguers who were M. P.s found themselves in a precarious position in the House. Peel had proposed lowering the difference in duty between slave-grown and free-grown sugar.<sup>1</sup> At first the measure was defeated by anti-slavery elements of both parties, but only by threatening to resign and with the support of Cobden and eleven free traders, Peel won the second division. Many of the liberals voted against the Prime Minister. McCord noted the widening breach between Peel and his immediate following after 1842 and maintained that the Minister's fiscal measures moved in the direction of greater freedom of commerce. The suspicion of many who withdrew their wholehearted support of Peel was voiced by the Morning Post:

Landowners are unwilling to break with the Minister of their choice. The alternative will not, however, long be left to them. The Minister will, at

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 192.

no distant date, break with them. Day by day the farmer-chosen Minister draws nearer to the ranks of the free traders. Very soon will landowners be compelled openly to adopt the principles of the League, or to look out for new leaders. Well may it be for the owners of the soil if they shall 'trust to their own resources,' before these resources shall be utterly dissipated by the actions of those principles of policy with which the name of Sir Robert Peel is identified. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The League kept a friendly eye on Peel and the more he differed with his protectionist followers, the more sympathy the free traders felt for him.

On June 25 Villiers moved his annual motion calling for the House to resolve itself into a Committee to consider the question of free trade. Cobden and Bright both spoke in the debate. The division was one hundred twenty-four for the motion and three hundred thirty against. The only progress the League could cite was the decrease of the majority rather than an increase in the minority.

On June 8 the League reminded those who were qualified to vote to enroll themselves and their friends on the register for the next year. To be entitled to vote a person must have occupied, during the twelve months previous to July 31, a premise of the value of £10 a year; he must have been rated for twelve months to the relief of the poor and have paid all poor rates and taxes assessed to the sixth of April preceding. With this announcement the League's summer revision of the registers began

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 194.

publicly. Sidney Smith was in charge of the London registration office and Hickin, the Manchester office. To aid the registration drive, Moore, George Thompson, and Bright made a speaking tour in July. They visited St. Albans, Portsmouth, Salisbury, Gravesend, Scarborough, Newcastle, and Carlisle.

Cobden and Moore spoke to some 1,000 persons on July 1, 1844, at Priory Meadow, Hastings in the afternoon. That evening the mechanics of Hastings met in a testimonial to Moore. A massive silver inkstand inscribed with the following was presented to Moore:

Presented by the Mechanics of Hastings and St. Leonard's to Robert Ross Rowan Moore Esq. in grateful remembrance of his incessant labours when a candidate for that borough in advocating the principles of Free Trade, which he so forcibly and eloquently expounded. March, 1844.<sup>1</sup>

On August 5 the League took on the Chartists in open meeting in the market square, Northampton. A requisition signed by some 1,200 agriculturists and manufacturers invited Bright and Cobden to be present. Another requisition was sent to Stafford O'Brien to be present to refute Cobden and Bright, but he declined. Finally the opposition was able to get Feargus O'Connor, a Chartist leader, to attend. Cobden opened the meeting proposed a free trade resolution which was seconded by Mr. Alderman Cotton. Feargus O'Connor then proposed an

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<sup>1</sup>League, July 6, 1844.



amendment against the repeal of the Corn Laws and against the League. McGrath, a Chartist orator, seconded the amendment. Bright rose to refute O'Connor in a lengthy speech. The meeting was polled and Cobden's resolution carried. O'Connor then demanded a division which only showed the minority of the Chartist ranks. The chairman declared the meeting adjourned and the League deputation along with most of the audience left. But O'Connor stayed to harangue the meeting and claim he had driven the League from the field.

On August 7 the League held its last Covent Garden meeting for the season. In a lengthy speech Wilson outlined the proposals for future action. He began by saying that the important business of the League was not now so much to educate or instruct the people as it was to act upon the electoral body generally. The free trade question had made progress, but the House still did not reflect public opinion. The League had selected one hundred forty boroughs upon which they thought, with reasonable exertions, an impression might be made. The League's agents were sent to these boroughs and found the registration not properly attended to. Thus the business of registration had been their chief concern. He also announced that although the subject of registration had occupied the greater part of their attention it by no means meant that they intended to discontinue the

discussion of this subject at public meetings at the proper time. Most recently meetings had been held at Gravesend with Bright as the speaker, at Portsmouth with Moore and George Thompson, at Salisbury with Moore and George Thompson, and at York, Hull, Newcastle, and Carlisle with Moore, George Thompson, and Plint the speakers. He noted that he had often heard the complaint that the League did not throw open the doors of Covent Garden to the public nor did they the doors of the Free Trade Hall at Manchester. The answer, he told them, was simple. They never had yet been able to find sufficient accommodation for their own members at their meetings and that when they did, they would then decide who would be admitted thereafter. He maintained that the League had not shunned public discussion; in the last year Cobden had held thirty open air meetings, and the recent meeting at Northampton where Cobden had routed O'Connor and carried a free trade resolution was an open air meeting in an unfavorable borough. Cobden told the audience that that morning he had read in the Morning Herald for the fourteenth time in the last six months that the League was positively defunct. Fox concluded the meeting with a survey of the contributions of the League to political agitation.

During September, 1844, most of the League's oral agitation stopped while the registration work went on.

The conservative agent announced that South Lancashire was lost unless the conservatives came forward soon; the League had thirty clerks at work in South Lancashire alone. Sidney Smith reported progress at the registration court in the city and at Tower Hamlets. The League reminded readers that from the first to the fifteenth of September was the time for the publication of the lists of persons objected to in the counties and cities and that the town clerks were required to keep a copy of the list which was to be available for anyone to consult free of charge.

The League opened its winter campaign of agitation on October 24 with a large rally at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Wilson gave a report of the registration activities; in a total of sixty-eight boroughs the League had made gains in the registration courts. Cobden announced a new plan for the electoral agitation--the purchase of forty shilling freeholds to gain enfranchisement. Roughly the plan was for the men in all the large manufacturing towns where the League strength lay to purchase in the adjoining counties a plot of land of sufficient size to grant the franchise. Cobden estimated the cost as low as £10 in some counties and the average at probably £65. The League's careful analysis of the registers told them that the landlords held power in the counties because of the tenants-at-will whom they could

control. Accordingly, the calculation was that 155,000 persons were needed to qualify themselves as county voters in order to neutralize the effect of the landlords. Cobden used all the appeals--to the safety of land investments, to the high return of such an investment, and to the need for every man who can to make his son at twenty-one an independent freeman. He told the free traders that with £60 they could be an equal with any Lord in the country at the polls. Cobden revealed that this method was being used extensively with much success in South Lancashire and that he considered the West Riding of Yorkshire, South Staffordshire, North Cheshire, Middlesex, Surrey, and Kent particularly vulnerable to the creation of new votes. This new agitation which was to occupy the free traders for the remainder of the campaign, was to be the most expensive and at the same time probably the most successful of the League's campaigns.

The lecturers were immediately sent out to urge and organize the new qualification campaign in the fall of 1844. Falvey spent the better part of October and November in Wiltshire. Acland had an unusual discussion with a Chartist, a Mr. John Harper, at Wakefield.

On November 22 Cobden and Bright opened a League registration and qualification campaign for the West Riding of Yorkshire. Sixty of the most active free traders were present at a specially called meeting in

Halifax. Wilson told of the means to be taken to promote the return of two free traders at the next election. He used the gains in South Lancashire as an example to show how manufacturing towns can secure the representation of manufacturing counties. He urged all free traders to procure county as well as borough qualifications. Bright spoke of the absurdity of the landed gentry controlling commerce. On November 25 Bright and Cobden carried the campaign for the West Riding to Hebden Bridge. Before the end of December Cobden, Bright, and Moore had visited some thirteen major towns organizing the machinery for qualification and speaking to the free traders.

George Thompson and Moore held a series of meetings in London during December to promote the qualification system and to get the support of the ladies for the Bazaar; they spoke at the Eastern Institution, Tower Hamlets, Hammersmith, and Kensington.

The League held the first winter meeting at Covent Garden on December 12. Wilson told the audience that the present meeting opened the seventh campaign under more favorable auspices than any other had begun. In ninety-eight boroughs the League had gained a majority in the revision courts and in four boroughs a free trader could be elected at an immediate election. He told of the intensive campaign to get the free traders of South Lancashire and West Riding to qualify. Cobden and Bright

had given each town a quota of qualifications and already some of the more active boroughs reported they had met their quota. The work was also going ahead in Middlesex. Villiers observed that the registration would add greatly to the League's power. Cobden reviewed the agitation and told of the increase of lecturing for the registration and qualification campaign. Bright concluded the evening with a speech warning that any return of prosperity would not induce the League to close its agitation.

In January, 1845, the Council issued an address summarizing the kinds and costs of agitation activities from September 23, 1843, to December 31, 1844. In September, 1843, the Council began a new electoral campaign and asked for £100,000 to carry on the renewed agitation. England and Wales were divided into thirteen electoral districts and an agent was sent to visit each borough and help form local registration societies. This first agent was to secure the services of a local agent who knew the law and the revision courts. During the report period two hundred meetings attended by a deputation from the Council were held in England and Scotland. One hundred fifty of these were in parliamentary boroughs. A series of large meetings were held at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester and at Covent Garden, London. The lecturers of the League visited and lectured in thirty-six of forty counties of England and in nearly all the Welsh counties, giving in

excess of six hundred lectures. The demand for lecturers was greater than the Council could supply. More than 2,000,000 of stamped and other publications were distributed. In addition, an average weekly publication of the League was 20,000, in sixty-seven weeks 1,340,000 copies were distributed. Some 25,000 letters were received at London and Manchester and 300,000 letters sent out. Registration gains in South Lancashire were 1,750 votes for free trade; North Lancashire 500 votes and Middlesex some votes. Within the last three months of 1844 a sufficient number of persons purchased freehold qualifications in North Cheshire, South Lancashire, and West Riding of York to secure those counties for free trade. The address closed with:

the Council view this as but the encouraging commencement of a movement to which they will devote their primary attention during the ensuing year. The Government of this country is at present in the hands of a class solely through the instrumentality of the Chandos clause, which places the county representation at the mercy of the landlords, through the votes of less than 200,000 tenants-at-will in England and Wales. From calculation carefully made the Council are convinced that it will be practicable, in a short time, to induce such a number of friends of Free Trade to purchase freehold qualifications as will neutralize these dependent voters at the poll. . . .<sup>1</sup>

During January, 1845, the League leaders made numerous speaking appearances to organize registration committees and to urge completion of the qualification campaign before the thirty-first of January deadline. On

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<sup>1</sup>League, January 25, 1845.

January 8 a large meeting of the League was held at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Wilson told the audience that this campaign was the most ambitious; in the ten weeks since Cobden had announced the plan to enfranchise the counties, some thirty-five meetings had been held in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Middlesex, and North Cheshire. Mark Philips spoke briefly on the need for all to cooperate. William Brown reviewed the history of free trade advocates from the time of William Pitt to 1845. Cobden defended the League against charges of intolerance, then reviewed the character and kind of opposition the League met. There were loud cries for Bright who came forward to briefly review the progress of the agitation in West Riding. Brooks moved the vote of thanks.

The parliamentary session of 1845 opened on February 4. In both the Lords and the Commons there was considerably more discussion on the condition of the country and the state of the farmer than there had been in the previous session. During March Cobden made one of the closest-argued and best-received of his speeches in the House.<sup>1</sup> Bright's attacks on the Games Laws not only won him admiration in the House, but Cobden hoped they would draw the sympathy of the farmer to the League.<sup>2</sup>

During February, March, and April, Moore and

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<sup>1</sup>See Young's analysis.

<sup>2</sup>Letter Cobden to Wilson, February, 1845.



Colonel Thompson made a long speaking tour for the promotion of the Bazaar which was now scheduled for May, 1845. At St. Mary's Hall, Coventry, they were joined by George Thompson who was a great favorite with the ladies' committees. They lectured at Hull, Uxbridge, Bradford, Newcastle, and Leeds before making a swing into Scotland. After a tour through the northern counties of England, they returned to London. The only letter surviving from this tour in the Wilson Papers is one from Moore to Wilson written from Paisley, April 1, where Moore assured Wilson the Colonel was in his best spirits even though he had a cold and was a little hoarse and that London had put the Colonel in spirit by announcing him for Covent Garden.

On May 8, 1845, the great National Anti-Corn Law League Bazaar opened at Covent Garden. This was the most massive, non-oral propaganda success of the entire League campaign. Besides the goal of adding funds, the Bazaar increased the number of League supporters. It allowed any man or woman of whatever means to contribute to the League agitation, to become identified with it, and thus to watch its continued operations. Hardly a London daily or weekly newspaper or monthly magazine failed to notice the Bazaar. Many such as the Illustrated London News published beautiful wood engravings of the decorations, the stalls, and some of the exhibits. Special trains from Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and other League centers brought

thousands to London for a four or five day Bazaar stay. The admission the first day was 10s. 6d; this was reduced on succeeding days to 1s. At 1s. the rush became so bad in the theatre that the price was periodically upped to half a crown to control the crowd. Everything imaginable was for sale. Leeds sent woolens and needlework; Bradford ladies' dresses; Kensington embroidery; Paisley shawls; Darlington coal and iron, and so forth. Each town sent its speciality. Manchester contracted for six stalls then sent enough goods for eighteen. Toys, books, china, porcelain, knives, brass, products from potatoes, tartans, sheeting, glass, candelabrum, rugs, and carpets filled the stalls. A complete post office was set up in the theatre; a special newspaper, The Bazaar Gazette, was published daily. The number of hours of manpower put into the planning and operation of the Bazaar was incalculable. If the reaction of the London press can be believed, the time and effort were well worth it. The Morning Chronicle called it "true agitation"; the Art Union commended the League for making the public acquainted with the capabilities of British commercial art. Douglas Jerrold's Magazine prophesied that the Bazaar would raise thoughts in the national mind that would not soon die.<sup>1</sup> When the Bazaar was finally closed down some £25,000 was raised

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, II, 337-339.

plus an incalculable amount of good will.<sup>1</sup>

In June Villiers brought his annual motion for repeal forward. After a one night debate the division was two hundred fifty against, one hundred twenty-two for, ten paired, and fifty-six absent.<sup>2</sup>

On June 18 the League recommenced their monthly meetings at Covent Garden. Wilson announced the receipts and attendance at the Bazaar, called attention to William Cullen Bryant, the American poet, who sat on the platform and told the audience that the £100,000 fund was £16,000 over its goal. Cobden reviewed the progress of repeal sentiment in Parliament; Bright talked of the Bazaar and its effects; and Fox reviewed the signs that the repeal agitation was coming to an end.

During the summer and early fall of 1845 the League contested a number of elections--sometimes unwisely. In July Falvey spoke for Adair a free trader at Cambridge who lost seven hundred forty-six to seven hundred twenty-nine. The death of Sir W. Follett on July 5 created a vacancy at Exeter which was contested by Major-General Briggs. Moore helped him canvass; Briggs was defeated by less than at the last election he had contested.

The specifics of how Colonel Thompson came to run

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>The Free Trade Speeches of the Right Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers, M. P. with a Political Memoir (London: Kegan Paul, French, & Co., 1883), pp. 220-263.

for Sunderland were not clear. Thompson's biographer maintained that sitting in the House became an obsession with the Colonel and he was often talked into running in very unfavorable circumstances.<sup>1</sup> The contest became a critical one for the League because of the expected entry of George Hudson, a nationally known railroad promoter, as the conservative candidate. Moore went to Sunderland; the speeches of Moore and Colonel Thompson were reprinted on a single sheet to serve as an election poster. The campaign was off to a good start when another free trader, John Bagshaw, was put up to split the Whig vote. Cobden wrote to Wilson:

You will have seen from my letters to the Colonel that the Whig clique up here are guiltless of having sent down Bagshaw to oppose us--It is the act of local men; and I presume lawyers who want to pluck a rich candidate are at the bottom of this mischief--Now there is but one way of securing even a chance--viz by coming to an amicable arrangement with the Bagshaw party so as to secure their unwilling away, that will not insure the Colonel's return, for it will not procure the cordial help of the Bagshaw party. If you both go to the poll, the Tory of course wins easily, and there will be a lasting division in the liberal ranks. The only chance then is by a friendly agreement--I know your difficulty with the Colonel--But there is only one way of doing the thing, & that is by a joint canvass or a ballot, and the weakest to give way--I have not proposed this to the Colonel, because the present state of his mind, such a suggestion would be misconstrued--Depend on it he has no chance unless the Bagshaw party assist, and even if they do, and he is opposed by Hudson he will be beaten--A more formidable opponent he could not have at the present moment than this railway King--He would go into the constituency with an intangible bribe for every class--The Capitalists would hope for premiums--The smaller

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<sup>1</sup>Johnson, p. 121.

fry would look for situations for their sons in the vast railway undertakings over which he rules absolutely, & the rope, iron, coal, & timber merchants all bid for his patronage--His undetectable powers of corruption at this moment are greater than the prime minister's. I would rather face any man than Hudson in a contest for Sunderland. All the eloquence of Moore or Bright will be like dust in the balance. If both Bagshaw and the Colonel go to the poll there will be some excuse for us, but if we are beaten in a single-handed contest, it will be a terrible blow. I know this proaking can do no good; but I like to face the worst.<sup>1</sup>

In a postscript, Cobden admonished:

pray look after expenses. Recollect it may be nearly 3 weeks before it is over--avoid too much printing--I think we overrate its value a little, as well as the enthusiasm of great meetings. It is influence in nine cases of ten which carries elections. . . .<sup>2</sup>

This was not a contest that excited the enthusiasm of the League speakers. Bright wrote to Wilson:

I suppose I must come to Sunderland & if I hear from you tomorrow I will be with you tomorrow evening or early on Saturday morning--indeed whether or not, if nothing occurs to prevent I think I had better join you. I am of the opinion your course must be decided by the sentiments of the majority of the Electors, if they can be ascertained. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Paulton, in a letter to an unknown correspondent, described the progress of the Sunderland campaign:

I am glad you have got back to Sunderland--Mr. Cobden does not feel quite safe about the Colonel's discretion without some prudent spirits about him--Mr. C. saw Bagshaw the night before last and says he appears to be not at all bitter towards the Colonel but seems to think he has a good chance--He thought also that whatever dissatisfaction might have existed

<sup>1</sup>Johnson, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 253-254.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

amongst his friends they will nevertheless vote for the Colonel in the end . . . Mr. Bright's speeches appear to have had a very good effect--and it seems as if every day diminishes the distance between the dis-united--This looks as if the irritation was gradually subsiding. . . .<sup>1</sup>

As Paulton's letter indicated Bagshaw was withdrawn and the League urged all free traders to unite. The polls closed with Hudson six hundred twenty-seven and Colonel Thompson four hundred ninety-seven. Thompson's defeat was due mainly to the split in the Whigs. The Leeds Mercury noted several of the leading Whigs voted for Hudson and continued, "it must be admitted that the extreme politics of Colonel Thompson alienated that party."<sup>2</sup> Also the Manchester Guardian was violently opposed to the Colonel for reasons it felt obliged to explain:

We trust that the members of the Anti-Corn Law League will now see the futility of trying to push into Parliament on the sole ground of his free trade opinions, a candidate who is, in every other point of view, decidedly objectionable and obnoxious, and whom no constituency in the kingdom can be brought to accept. Not only is Col. Thompson a chartist of the wildest school; but he is a man who has been ever ready, as his conduct has shown, to sacrifice the liberal cause or the cause of free trade to his own personal vanity. . . . We do not much admire Mr. Hudson . . . but we would rather have a parliament of Hudsons than of Col. Thompsons. . . .<sup>3</sup>

A series of events in the fall brought to a conclusion the need for the League's agitation. By October

<sup>1</sup>Johnson, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup>Manchester Times, August 23, 1845.

<sup>3</sup>August 16, 1845.

it became apparent that the potato crop had failed drastically. As famine spread borough and county meetings were held urging the ports be opened to an alternative supply of food. The Peel cabinet was debating what should be done. It was in the midst of this crisis that Sir John Russell wrote his Edinburgh letter stating he no longer believed it was worth struggling for a fixed duty compromise. McCord has suggested that this harrying of the Whigs out of their fixed duty scheme was the real success of the League.<sup>1</sup> The Whigs had been induced to gradually lower the duty they proposed mainly through the pressure of the free traders. The League, for the first time, could see one of the major political parties committed to repeal of the Corn Laws.

Many of the League leaders did not like Russell but they saw the value of his support, for example, Paulton wrote:

There can be no mistake about the value of Lord John's letter to us,--it has inspired additional confidence and determination into all our earnest friends, and forced the Whigs into a position from which they can't retreat. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Nor did the Whig leaders all take kindly to their new friends; Charles Greville wrote that success had quite turned Cobden's head.<sup>3</sup> Thus many Leaguers and Whig

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

leaders also were relieved when Russell failed to form a government late in 1845. Charles Buller, a young Radical, voiced the opinion of many:

I think the failure was a blessed thing. Ld. John would not have been able to repeal the Corn Laws, unless Peel means to do the same thing; & if Peel does it why he will succeed more easily, & we are more sure of the same result. I believe Peel will give us substantially a total, & almost an immediate repeal: & even if he gives us worse terms, they will be better for us than Ld. John's mere attempt to gain the whole. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1845, as the crisis became obvious, the League stepped up the pace of agitation. In November Cobden and Bright undertook a speaking tour to organize registration and qualification committees at Blackburn, Preston, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Burnley, Huddersfield, and Halifax. On November 13 a public dinner was held for Villiers in the town hall, Birmingham. Earl Ducie, Cobden, Bright, Fox, Colonel Thompson, and William Brown spoke in tribute of Villiers' contribution to Corn Law repeal. On November 20 Moore began a month-long tour of Middlesex to urge the purchase of 40s. freeholds first in the county in which a man lived, then in as many neighboring counties as possible. Before December 19 he gave twenty-one separate evening lectures. In December Cobden and Bright continued to Derby, Nottingham, Wootton-Under-Edge, Bristol, Wakefield, Bath, Stroud, Gloucester, and Hammersmith.

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 198.



On December 23 a large crowd of bankers, merchants, and manufacturers from the northern counties met at the town hall, Manchester to consider the means by which they might aid the efforts of the National Anti-Corn Law League. George Wilson read a financial report of the League's past activities and announced the commencement of a £250,000 fund. Alderman Callender of Manchester, Cobden, Bright, Brotherton, Heyworth, and several others spoke explaining the League activities. In about one hour and a half some £60,000 was subscribed to the fund; twenty-three firms gave £1,000 each. It was now clear that if the Corn Laws were not repealed the League was prepared to launch an even more extensive campaign. Also some of the conservatives must have figured how many forty-shilling freeholds £250,000 would buy if the League had a mind to spend the money for freeholds.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most successful years of the League's agitation campaign was 1845. An almost unlimited amount of financial support had allowed great diversification of the types and amounts of propaganda put out. The kinds of activities stressed most by the League in 1845 can be seen from the following financial report issued December 27, 1845:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>League, December 27, 1845.

	£	s.	d.
Distribution of tracts	349	1	7
Furniture and fixtures	218	19	0
Deputation Expenses (including traveling)	462	12	4
Grants to local free trade comm.	1000	17	0
General salaries of office staff London and Manchester	1336	14	6
Postage stamps sundry	1528	1	5
Meetings, hire of rooms, erection of hustings	1669	16	6
Salaries & expenses of lecturers	2320	4	9
Rent, taxes, gas, incl. offices and Covent Garden	3992	1	8
Stamped publications	6854	9	2
Bazaar expenses	5712	13	4
League newspaper	10161	7	1
Registration expenses	15534	4	1
Balance on Hand	12033	11	1
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	£63174	13	6

Early in 1846 Peel announced his plan for repealing the Corn Laws--a small and diminishing duty would be retained for a few years. In spite of the League's pressure the Prime Minister would not come out for total and immediate repeal. The more extreme members of the Council led by Prentice wanted to continue the fight

against Peel and all comers until total repeal was achieved. From letters between League leaders in January, 1846, it was clear that the extremists represented only a small part of the League members. McLaren wrote from Edinburgh that the majority favored support of Peel. Sheffield Leaguers were anxious that no impediment might be thrown in the way of the Minister's plan. Cobden wrote to Wilson that Londoners were in favor of the plan.<sup>1</sup>

The League Council met on January 29 to decide on the official attitude toward Peel's bill; J. B. Smith sent Cobden the following report:

There was a meeting of the Council today & as there is great excitement & anxiety to know what the League intends to do it was crowded with folks who seldom attend. Greg thought we should be cautious how we refuse what is offered & said he was satisfied if Peel's measure was carried we should not find the means to carry on the League agitation. Jas. Heywood though we ought to unite with Lord John & such namby pamby stuff as you might expect from him. We turned the tide a little & passed a resolution recommending petitions from all parts of the country for total & immediate repeal, & then adjourned.<sup>2</sup>

When Cobden returned to Manchester he exerted his influence on some of the more reluctant members of the Council.

The League of February 7 announced:

The League will offer no factious or fanatical opposition to Sir Robert Peel's measure . . . nothing will be done that can for a moment put in hazard the vast

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

substantial benefits which the Ministerial proposal offers to the country. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Peel helped the League by suggesting that he would surely accept total and immediate repeal if the House would vote for it. Villiers then moved for the last time a resolution calling for total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws which, as usual, was defeated. Nevertheless, the protectionists got the message that there was a fate worse than Peel's bill.

The League continued a loud, busy oral agitation through January although even then the fate of repeal was out of the hands of the Leaguers. McCord concluded:

the League for eight years had headed the agitation against the Corn Laws but now they were being repealed, the Leaguers were without any control over the procedure or the exact terms utilized.<sup>2</sup>

The leaders of the League made several visits for qualification and fund raising purposes early in January. A festival atmosphere prevailed at Newcastle as bells pealed welcome to Cobden and Bright and special trains brought listeners by the thousands. Colonel Thompson, Bright, and William Rathbone attended a Liverpool fund raising dinner. On January 10 the League announced that Cobden and Bright had now completed for the season their tour of agitation in the counties, having visited some twelve counties where qualification committees were hard at work. Local

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

associations were asked to collect funds without visits from Cobden and Bright. Despite the League's waning Colonel Thompson, Cobden, and Bright made four more official visits in January to Carlisle, Leeds, Norwich, and Kendal.

Two large meetings of the League were held in January. The first, on January 14 was an aggregate meeting of the League at Covent Garden. Over 8,000 tickets were sold to a mostly standing room crowd. Wilson reported £150,000 of the £250,000 fund had already been received. Cobden, Bright, and Fox spoke of the progress of anti-Corn Law opinion to the present where they stood on the brink of success. On the following evening the League held another great meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Some 9,000 gained admission by ticket. Bright, Cobden, Fox, Brotherton, Colonel Thompson, and Henry Ashworth spoke of the now successful agitation.

While Peel's bill passed through the various stages, the League kept up the front of agitation but quietly in February began to dismantle its machinery. Subscriptions to the £250,000 fund came in slowly. In March many employees in the electoral office were given notice; no new qualifications were accepted. In April a delegation of the Council went up to London to start closing operations there; in May Falvey, Finnigan, and probably other

lecturers, were dismissed.<sup>1</sup>

On June 26 Bright could write to Wilson, "The assent is given. . . ."<sup>2</sup> The leaders of the League, particularly Cobden, received congratulations from all quarters. It was generally believed that repeal was the work of the League. Peel helped this conception by a generous tribute to Cobden in the House.

The last issue of the League appeared on July 4; its chief function was to report the final meeting of the Council of the Anti-Corn Law League held July 2 in the town hall, Manchester with over five hundred gentlemen present. Wilson took the chair and sketched the operations of the League from its formation to its triumph. Cobden moved that the League close out its affairs. Bright seconded the motion. R. H. Greg moved that after the first installment--twenty percent--to the £250,000 fund was paid, subscribers be released from all further obligations. Henry Ashworth seconded the motion. Edward Baines of Leeds moved and P. A. Taylor of London seconded a resolution that the free traders watch closely the threat of the opposition to contest the next election with a view to overturning the Corn Law bill. All motions were carried unanimously. William Brown of Liverpool and John Cheetham of Stalybridge moved that if a serious attempt

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<sup>1</sup>Letters in the Wilson Papers.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 204.

was made by the protectionist party to tamper with the repeal of the Corn Laws that the executive Council of the League be empowered to call the League into existence again. The resolution carried. It was then moved and passed that Wilson leave the chair. Cobden, explaining that many times Wilson had been asked to accept a salary but had declined, moved that Wilson accept a sum of not less than £10,000 for his services. Motion carried. Rathbone of Liverpool moved that the efforts of the entire Council be recognized with a suitable testimonial. Motion passed. Wilson, resuming the chair, announced, "as no other gentleman has anything to address to this meeting, it is now my duty to say that the Anti-Corn Law League stands conditionally dissolved." A deep silence followed for a few seconds, then the man who personified the agitation, Richard Cobden, quietly gave the League's benediction, "we began in solemnity, and we end in solemnity. The world will see, at all events, that whatever else they may be, they are earnest men who have engaged in this work."<sup>1</sup>

Summary of the Oral Agitation of the  
Anti-Corn Law League

The agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws carried out first by the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association then the Anti-Corn Law League from 1838 until 1846

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<sup>1</sup>League, July 4, 1846.

can be separated into four distinct periods. During the first period--October, 1838, to December, 1839--the agitation focused on a hired speaker giving a series of two or three speeches then discussing or debating the question of Corn Law repeal with any Chartist, Tory, or other challenger. The second campaign--January, 1840, to August, 1840--continued to emphasize the lecture agitation although considerable attention was now given to the publication of tracts and to the Anti-Corn Law Circular. No carefully organized propaganda campaign was carried on during the third period--September, 1840, to August, 1842. A mélange of lectures, weekly meetings, deputation visits, county and borough meetings, and conferences were attempted. Those forms which were most successful either in dramatizing the agitation, getting money, winning elections, or organizing registration campaigns were kept for use in the fourth period. In the Registration and Qualification Campaign--September, 1842, to July, 1846--the League concentrated on the reform of the register and the purchase of qualifications with weekly meetings, conferences, county meetings, and election speaking secondary forms of agitation. From 1838 until 1840 oral agitation was the prominent feature of the propaganda campaign of the Anti-Corn Law League; from 1840 to 1846 more money and more energy was spent on the non-oral agitation.

Lectures were the first method of oral agitation



used by the Anti-Corn Law League. Each of the histories of the League stressed the difficulty the Council had in finding men who combined the talents of an effective speaker and a knowledge of the Corn Laws with an honest, reliable character. Paulton and Murray had a broad familiarity with the arguments against the Corn Laws when the League hired them. There is some evidence to suggest that men such as Acland and Liddell were hired because of their past successes as speakers and agitators, then they had to study and learn the anti-Corn Law arguments.<sup>1</sup> Many Council members were not enthusiastic about Sidney Smith's appointment because they felt he was an ineffective speaker; during the campaign Smith was more useful as editor of the Circular and as a political organizer in London than he was as a lecturer. Acland, Murray, and Liddell all dealt effectively with questions and discussions. The League did not always choose effective speakers, but they chose reliable men as lecturers in contrast to some of the questionable men hired as registration advisors and political agents.<sup>2</sup>

A. W. Paulton made the first lecture tour for the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association in November, 1838, in the areas near Manchester. By January, 1839, Paulton had

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to Wilson, May 5, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Letters in the Wilson Papers from Hickin to Wilson.

lectured in seven counties to 80,000 people; from February to April, 1839, he carried on an expensive and not too successful lecture campaign in London. Paulton continued his lectures during May in Lancashire before he was recalled to Manchester. From June until October, 1839, Paulton lectured continuously in Scotland in an effort to whip up enthusiasm for contributions to the League campaign; he returned with many new subscriptions to the Circular but not a cent of the funds so badly needed by the League.

From February until April, 1840, Paulton joined Sidney Smith in a massive effort to organize London. He gave twenty-eight lectures and was able to organize a workingman's association but by April the lack of money forced the abandonment of the London campaign. Paulton made a short lecture tour to York and Newcastle in May before he became very ill and was forced to return to Manchester to recuperate. In March, 1841, Paulton faced stiff opposition in Weymouth; in April he discussed with the Chartists at Oldham and Warrington; and in May he completed a successful agitation in Kent. There were scattered reports of Paulton's lectures for the remainder of 1841 and for the beginning of 1842. In the massive reorganization of lecture assignments in 1842, Paulton was assigned to Worcestershire and Herefordshire. He lectured, supervised the distribution of tracts, and gathered

electoral information in his district until September, 1843, when he was recalled by the Council to take over the editorship of the League. Paulton spent the remainder of the agitation primarily with the paper and secondarily in scattered lecture tours and election speaking.

Sidney Smith was the first lecturer hired by the Anti-Corn Law League. He and J. H. Shearman, his private political agent, made a tour through eastern England in the spring of 1839. At Louth Smith was fined for lecturing by the local magistrates; at Boston he had to lecture in the open air because both the town hall and the theatre were refused for his lectures. Smith overcame disturbances by the gentlemen farmers at Stamford and Petersborough, but he and Shearman were the cause of the Town and Gown riot at Cambridge. At the end of May, 1839, Smith was recalled to Manchester where he accepted the editorship of the Circular and the position of secretary to the League.

From January to May, 1840, Smith delivered forty-five lectures in the unsuccessful campaign to organize London. In June he was instructed to follow Justins, the Bread-Tax lecturer, into Dorset and Devonshire. Smith lectured nightly during September and October in the various wards of Liverpool; in November he was sent to agitate Wiltshire. In 1841 Sidney Smith spoke for J. B. Smith at the Walsall election; in February and March he

continued to lecture in London and the south of England. With the reorganization of the lecture campaign in 1842, Sidney Smith's name no longer appeared on the lists of League lecturers. From 1842 until 1846, he was permanently assigned to London; with the beginning of the registration campaign Smith was put in charge of the London office and only occasionally lectured for the League.

James Acland was the first working class lecturer hired in April, 1839. Acland was experienced, honest, and enthusiastic but given to rash language and action. His usefulness in the face of stiff opposition from the landed or Tory interests was enough to overcome his faults and he remained with the League as a lecturer until 1846. Acland began his agitation in the southwest of England in the predominantly agricultural counties. In five weeks in Devon Acland delivered twenty-six lectures and held twenty-three discussions. He continued to Cornwall where he enjoyed several successes in spite of constant Chartist opposition. Under the individual association payment plan Acland lectured to Wolverhampton, Walsall, and West Brunswick in 1839.

Acland began 1840 with a successful fight against the Chartists at Birmingham, then continued to Norringhamshire. From April to July Acland was in Norfolk and Suffolk which he reported would only be won by laborious

perseverance. At Saxmundham Acland's body was battled for by the repealers and the Corn-Law men; and at Clare the squires marched the parish band against him. Late in September Acland was sent to lecture and survey the electoral possibilities of Stourbridge, Kidderminster, and the surrounding area. Early in October Acland was assigned to Sheffield to lecture, to put down the Chartists, and to get the Sheffield broadcloth to contribute financially to the League. After defeating the local Corn Law advocate, Dr. Holland, in discussion, Acland was able to complete his assignment. In the middle of Acland's Sheffield lectures news reached the Council that Murray was under interdict not to lecture in Limerick and Acland was quickly dispatched to assist Murray.

In January, 1841, Acland was a member of the first deputation sent to Walsall to investigate the electoral possibilities for a free trade candidate; there was evidence he lectured nightly during the campaign. In March Acland opened a vigorous campaign in Buckinghamshire. At Thame the gentry charged the audience on horseback creating great confusion; at Brill the Duke of Buckingham's agents prevented Acland from lecturing. In eleven weeks in Buckinghamshire Acland gave fifty-nine lectures and had one hundred fifty petitions signed. He lectured in Liverpool during the June election. In the 1842 reorganization Acland was assigned to the neighborhood of

the Duke of Cleveland; he lectured and supervised the distribution of tracts in his district. During the remainder of Acland's service with the League there were few specific notices of his lectures; he was used mainly in the registration and qualification campaigns and occasionally as an election speaker.

John Joseph Finnigan, a Manchester working man, was hired as a League lecturer in March, 1840, after a short successful career as a speaker for the Manchester Operative Anti-Corn Law Association. Finnigan was hired by the League to meet the Chartists on their own grounds. His first assignment ended when he returned home telling the Council he was unable to agitate Buckinghamshire. Finnigan was next assigned to his native city of Dublin, but was unable to carry on a successful agitation because of the lack of large manufacturing support. In July after several verbal battles with the mayor, Finnigan formed an association in Cork.

In 1841 Finnigan lectured in North Cheshire and met Sleigh of the London Agricultural Society in debate. In 1842 he was assigned to Yorkshire to lecture and distribute tracts. Further reports of Finnigan's lectures were infrequent; he was assigned to the preparation for deputation visits to county meetings, to election speaking plus many non-oral activities for the remainder of the campaign.

John Murray, a keeper of a beer shop in Liverpool, was hired as a League lecturer in March, 1840, and assigned to Ireland. Murray faced the combined opposition of the Chartists and the agricultural interests, but he was generally able to quell disturbances and finish his lectures during his first campaign. In October, 1840, the Council sent Murray to Cork, which he agitated successfully. At Limerick the mayor, the magistrates, and the city police force combined to prohibit Murray from lecturing but Acland, with the help of the local moral force Chartists, was able to rescue Murray. With the notoriety he gained from Limerick, Murray continued his tour of southern Ireland successfully.

In January, 1841, Murray was sent to help in the Walsall campaign by the Liverpool Association. In one of the first large-scale League deputation visits to a county meeting at Lancaster in April, 1841, Murray was sent ahead to lecture in the smaller towns and to whip up enthusiasm for the League visit. Murray was assigned to lecture in Derbyshire in the 1842 reorganization. For the remainder of the agitation he was used as an advance man for League deputation meetings and in the registration campaign.

Several other lecturers were hired by the League for limited periods of time. George Greig, the secretary of the Leeds Anti-Corn Law Association lectured for the League in 1839 in areas near Leeds and in 1840 in London.

Walter Griffith lectured in Wales, in both Welsh and English, from the spring of 1840 until the repeal of the Corn Laws. In June, 1841, the British India Society loaned their secretary, George Thompson, a former anti-slavery advocate, to the League as a lecturer. He toured the large towns first in England, then in Scotland in the fall of 1841. After a visit to India Thompson returned to make a long tour in behalf of the Bazaar in 1845. He also was an infrequent speaker at the League weekly meetings and conferences. There is some evidence that J. S. Buckingham, a world traveler and speaker, became a League lecturer in the spring of 1841. In 1841 Colonel Perronet Thompson made a lecture tour for the League. After a partial reconciliation with the Manchester liberals Colonel Thompson remained with the League as a deputation speaker throughout the remainder of the campaign. Timothy Falvey, a silk weaver from Macclesfield, became a League lecturer early in 1842. He was assigned to the East Riding of York in the 1842 reorganization. Falvey's main duties were to lay the groundwork for League deputation visits and to assist in elections. Daniel Liddell, a political organizer who joined the League as a speaker in 1842 was permanently assigned to the Northern District. John Jenkins was assigned to South Wales in 1842; and Griffith remained in North Wales. Clarke and A. L. Saul were assigned to the agricultural areas in 1842. Saul was



soon transferred to London where he acted as a secretary and part-time lecturer for the remainder of the campaign. Archibald Prentice made short lecturing tours to the farming areas near Manchester throughout the entire agitation.

The size and type of audience who usually listened to the League lecturers is difficult to determine because the newspapers of the 1840s were either biased totally in favor of the League or totally against the League. The League's practice of paying several newspapers to insert favorable reports of League activity further clouds the matter. It is probable that Acland or Paulton could have drawn the five to eight hundred or a thousand listeners reported for a single lecture in an open-air meeting on a market day. The novelty, alone, of a lecturer in a small town not used to many visitors would draw a larger number of the curious. Also manufacturers often stopped a factory in order that the operatives might attend an anti-Corn Law lecture. A comparison of audience reported figures in newspapers and letters for part of 1839 indicates that Acland, Sidney Smith, and Paulton were likely to report from one to two hundred over the actual attendance in open-air meetings; anything between three hundred fifty people to five hundred people was usually rounded off to five hundred. The use of the word "upwards" was also popular. An audience of four hundred seventy by

ticket admission with several standees became upwards of five hundred in Circular reports. Nevertheless, the League lecturers did draw out large numbers of both those who came to listen and those who came to heckle.

Few generalizations can be made about the occupation and class of those who listened to the lecturers. In 1838 the audiences consisted of all classes and all occupations. About May, 1839, the Council sent out instructions to the lecturers to concentrate on the electorally important towns. This, however, did not insure that audiences were solely of electors until the beginning of the final campaign when tickets for county meetings were often sent only to electors. Even during this campaign the operative was a permanent fixture of most audiences. The League specifically directed its campaign to the middle classes, then the operative and finally the farmer became the chief targets.

During the beginning of the anti-Corn Law agitation a significant portion of the audiences of the lecturers were Chartists. Often itinerant Chartist orators followed League lecturers asking questions, discussing, organizing breaking-up parties, and other such activities. Brown, in her study of the relationship between the Chartists and the League,<sup>1</sup> suggested that the Chartist fear of the

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<sup>1</sup>Lucy Brown, "The Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League," Chartist Studies, ed. Asa Briggs (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1965), 342-371.

League encroaching on its working class support was the cause of the continual trouble between the two groups but that the total Chartist attitude toward the League was neither consistent nor clearly thought out.<sup>1</sup> The lecturers of the League consistently reported triumphing over their Chartist opponents. Brown agreed that:

Chartist speakers tended to flounder in discussion with the well-drilled lectures of the League, and may at times have expressed themselves in the heat of a meeting in a way which did not do justice to their thought.<sup>2</sup>

There were many physical force Chartist disruptions of League meetings in the beginning years of the agitation; but the hiring of moral force Chartists as lecturers and the organization of Operative Anti-Corn Law Associations by the League, along with the collapse of Chartism after its support of the 1842 turn-outs, effectively stopped most of the Chartist disturbances.

The average costs of the lecture campaign varied according to the position of the lectures as the main focus or as a secondary aim of the League propaganda campaign. In 1838 the first tour made near Manchester by J. B. Smith and Paulton cost a total of £50 or an average of £4 2s. per lecture for the twelve lectures given. Paulton spent £87 in three months agitation in London alone in 1839. The lecturers were paid four guineas a

<sup>1</sup>Brown, p. 351.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

lecture in 1839 and probably £200 a year in the later years of the agitation. The League took care of all other expenses. Accounts for 1839 list such additional expenses as rent for the lecture room, printing of bills and placards, posting placards, wax candles or gas, bellman, man to mind petition sheets, and door keepers. Acland's expenses for six weeks ending July, 1839, averaged £6 17s. 10d. a lecture. For a time late in 1839 the League stopped paying the lecturers expenses, insisting that local associations meet all costs including a donation to the League to cover the lecturer's traveling expenses. By December, 1839, the Council estimated four hundred lectures had been delivered by the four lecturers at an average cost of £3 2s. per lecture. Figures of the total lecture cost are unavailable for succeeding years. In 1845 £2,320 4s. 9d. was paid for salaries and expenses of an unspecified number of lectures and lecturers. In 1839 one half of the total agitation budget was spent by the lecturers; in 1845 only three percent of the total funds were spent on the salaries and expenses of lecturers.

A profile of the lecture agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League would include the following. The lecturer arrived in town and immediately advertised a series of two, three, or more lectures and discussions. The first lecture was informative; the lecturer discussed the history of the Corn Laws, their failure, and harmful

effects. The second evening was usually a combined lecture-discussion where the lecturer answered all questions and applied his examples and statistics directly to the county or borough where he was speaking. If a third meeting was held, the lecturer attempted to draw out one Corn Law advocate to discuss the merits of repeal in a specifically allotted time sequence. Lectures of two or three hours were common; some discussions took up to nine hours. Tracts were distributed to the audience either after the lecture or in the days before the lecture to build up opinion and anticipation. In the more favorable boroughs, where a sizable number of electors were repealers before the lecturer arrived, it was often possible for the lecturer to form an Anti-Corn Law Association after the second lecture. For part of the agitation the lecturers gathered signatures to repeal petitions after the lecture. When Cobden could control the lecturer's assignments, they were sent to doubtful but not desperate or hopeless counties and boroughs. In the farming areas when weather permitted the more resourceful lecturers spoke to large out-of-door audiences. The Anti-Corn Law League lecturer was a hired political agent with sufficient knowledge of his subject to lecture and discuss with all opponents. Some lecturers also attacked the evils of the current system; others merely attempted to convince and stimulate their audiences.

A second form of oral agitation used infrequently by the League was formal debates and discussions. Acland, Finnigan, Murray, Paulton, and Cobden took on a variety of Chartist and Central Agricultural Society orators in structured discussion of Corn Law repeal. Acland carried a three-day, nine-proposition discussion with Dr. Holland which won the allegiance of the Sheffield broadcloth for the League. Cobden defeated O'Connor, the leader of the physical force Chartists, in open debate at Northampton. In general the League speakers received the majority of the show of hands for their repeal resolutions.

Weekly League meetings were the third form of oral agitation used from March, 1842, until the repeal of the Corn Laws. From September 15, 1842, until January 26, 1843, weekly meetings opened at the Crown and Anchor in London then moved to the Drury Lane Theatre until May 3, 1843. Two monthly meetings were held in September and November, 1843, at Covent Garden Theatre. From January 25 to August 7, 1844, a major series of twenty weekly meetings were held at Covent Garden. In 1845 the meetings became monthly and two of the seven were held in Manchester.

The weekly meeting was obviously not solely characterized by its occurrence every seven days; at each meeting the audience heard reports of the progress of the lecturers and of deputation visits for the registration

and qualification campaigns. Each meeting was designed to impress the public by its crowded attendance and its impressive show of League strength. The audiences of the early 1842 meetings in Manchester heard reports of correspondence received and the leading men in the movement besides the regular reports of progress. The 1844 series in Covent Garden was designed as a forum for the most influential League members--Members of Parliament, Peers, League Council members, and ministers of religion. In a total of sixty-nine weekly meetings, Wilson chaired forty-seven; Cobden spoke at thirty-one; Bright at twenty-six; W. J. Fox at sixteen mainly in 1844 and 1845; Milner Gibson, M. P. for Manchester, at thirteen; Moore and Villiers at twelve; and Colonel Thompson at nine meetings. The weekly meeting was characterized by the number of different speakers which were heard; in the sixty-nine meetings, seventy-nine different men explained or argued the case for repeal. Twenty-two of these seventy-nine different speakers were Members of Parliament and sixteen were Christian ministers. Each weekly meeting reflected the current success or explained the current electoral defeat of the League and was of primary value in the show of strength and the variety of speakers it provided.

League deputation visits to county or borough meetings were a fourth mode of oral agitation used by the League. Along with lectures and weekly meetings, the

deputation visits were the most frequently used agitation form. Late in 1840 the visits by League Council members began with a meeting at Bolton to urge the support of a free trade candidate in the event of an election. Deputations from the League made county or borough visits either to raise money, to convince the farmers of the necessity of repeal, or to organize registration and qualification committees. The fund collection meetings--often teas, soirées, or dinners--were the most spectacular occasions because of the numerous attendance and the large contributions recorded. The agricultural meeting was often a hard-fought verbal battle between Leaguers and Protectionists.

Four of the League Council members made eight percent of the deputation visits. Cobden was the most frequent deputation member. He carried on the majority of the agricultural meetings, speaking on over fifty separate occasions. Cobden also was the usual leader of the deputation when they went fund raising or registration organizing. John Bright and R. R. R. Moore were Cobden's chief lieutenant orators in deputation meetings. On fund raising occasions Cobden usually began the meeting, Bright followed describing the suffering caused by the Corn Laws, and Moore, after briefly reviewing the progress of the agitation, made the specific appeal for funds. Cobden was the chief speaker in agricultural meetings; Bright and



Moore were occasionally called on to take Cobden's place, but after Bright's defeat at Huntingdon Moore and Bright confined themselves to heckling and support speeches. Colonel Perronet Thompson joined several League deputations--primarily those for fund collecting and the promotion of the Bazaar. Villiers and W. J. Fox were infrequent deputation members.

Conferences of the various anti-Corn Law associations held in both Manchester and in London were the sixth form of oral agitation used by the League. Before the opening of Parliament in February each year the associations assembled to decide on the course of action the delegates would pursue in regard to Villiers annual motion for repeal of the Corn Laws. In August, 1841, the League held a great conference of Christian ministers to show the support of the religious community for repeal. In July, 1842, the League met in London from July 5 to 29 to arouse the public from their apathy toward the repeal of the Corn Laws. A large conference held in Manchester from January 30 to February 3, 1843, was the most broadly based conference the League held, having separate meetings devoted to manufacturing, agricultural, and religious arguments for repeal. The League conferences were held primarily in the early years of the agitation to hear progress reports and to show the strength of the League; when the Covent Garden weekly meetings took over the function as

show-places of the strength and progress of repeal agitation, the conferences, for other than business purposes, were discontinued.

One final category of oral agitation activities of the League included some ten miscellaneous special meetings. In February, 1843, meetings were held in both Manchester and London to support and defend Cobden after Peel's attack in the House. After the League headquarters was moved to London in 1843, the League held a huge aggregate meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, to open their campaign in the manufacturing districts. A special meeting was called on August 8, 1844, to pay tribute to Villiers for his leadership of the cause of free trade in the House. Most of the special meetings were held in Manchester; League Council members and Members of Parliament were the most frequent speakers.

The Anti-Corn Law League organized one of the most successful political agitations of its time. From 1838 to 1840 the oral segment of the agitation was most important; after 1840 such non-oral activities as the registration and qualification campaign received the major emphasis while weekly meetings and deputation visits were secondary forms of agitation. During its existence the League used seven forms of oral agitation: lectures, discussions and debates, weekly meetings, League deputation visits to county and borough meetings, election speaking,

conferences, and special meetings. The available evidence indicated that lectures were the most often used form of oral agitation with deputation visits to county and borough meetings plus weekly meetings nearly as frequent. Even though the oral agitation received only thirteen percent of the agitation funds in 1845, it was the most ostentatous and flamboyant part of the agitation and thus was extremely popular with League members.

### CHAPTER III

#### PERSONAL PERSUASION USED BY THE ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE SPEAKERS

From 1839 to 1846 the Anti-Corn Law League carried on a successful agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws. At first A. W. Paulton, Sidney Smith, James Acland, John Murray, and J. J. Finnigan--the League's hired lecturers--were the most active speakers. As the League became more affluent and as support for Corn Law repeal strengthened the League leaders took over the League public platform. The extent of the success of the speaking of both the lecturers and the League leaders depended not only on the internal construction of their speeches but also on the interaction between the speakers and their audiences. The audience's preconceived opinion of the speaker determined the amount and kind of opposition allowed; also the speaker's personal response to his subject matter, to his audiences, and to the disturbances to his lectures in turn influenced the audience's acceptance of the resolution for total and immediate repeal. To be successful a League speaker had to gain a majority of hands for his resolution for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. In order to gain this end the League speakers argued that

repeal would lower the price of bread, raise wages, and create more markets for the farmer; that free trade would contribute to peace among nations; and that monopoly only lined the pockets of the landlord at the expense of his laborers and the operatives. The League speakers detailed the distress and suffering of the laborer and the numbers of people who were kept alive only with relief from the government. The speakers also used appeals directly connected with their personal influence derived from class, position, or experience; or with their personal experiences as merchants, farmers, or Members of Parliament. This chapter contains an analysis of the personal persuasion used by the League speakers.

A number of factors must be considered in an analysis of the personal persuasion used by the speakers of the Anti-Corn Law League. The speaker may use the audience's prior impression of him to advantage. Or the speaker may use the factors of invention which reflect his personal involvement in his arguments, i.e., the appeals of character, of popularity, of expert knowledge of the subject, of intimate knowledge of the subject, of the subject matter chosen, of the nature of the supporting materials chosen, and of the thoroughness of the argument. The development of the speaker's ideas and the extent and manner in which these ideas are presented plus the choice and arrangement of the words of the argument may also be

unique reflections of the speaker. Finally the speaker's delivery, his speaking ability, enthusiasm, sincerity, confidence in himself, and his ability to speak clearly reflect his personal persuasion.

Of the seven forms of oral agitation used by the Anti-Corn Law League only the lectures, the weekly meetings, and deputation visits were of sufficient duration, size, and importance to warrant analysis. The period from 1838 until 1842 was chosen for lecture analysis because it represents the period of primacy of the lecture agitation and because the letters and speech texts available are from this period. Before 1842 Sidney Smith, A. W. Paul-ton, James Acland, and John Murray carried on the bulk of the lecture agitation and thus were chosen for analysis. J. J. Finnigan may be omitted because he was not so consistently active as the other lecturers and because he spent more time in non-oral activities than did the other four lecturers. All available speech texts, excerpts, and critical analyses will be used to construct the use of personal persuasion by the League lecturers.

The final period of agitation--the Registration and Qualification Campaign--was chosen for analysis of the speaking by the League leaders. From September, 1842, until the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, the leaders of the League took the public platform in weekly meetings and in deputation visits. Richard Cobden was the most active

speaker in both the weekly meetings and the deputation visits. John Bright and R. R. R. Moore, who either separately or together accompanied Cobden, were the second most active League speakers. Colonel Thomas P. Thompson made approximately the same number of deputation visits as Bright and Moore, but was an infrequent weekly meeting speaker. William Johnson Fox was a frequent and popular weekly meeting speaker in 1844 and 1845; and Charles P. Villiers, because of his position as a Member of Parliament, was a popular though less frequent weekly meeting speaker. The analysis of personal persuasion of the League leaders includes the speeches of these six men.

From the sixty-nine weekly meetings held from March, 1842, until January, 1846, twenty-nine were chosen for analysis--the number in each year selected to correspond to the ratio of that years' meetings to the agitation total. The two great meetings in 1846 were omitted entirely because they resembled triumphant rallies more than they did weekly meetings. Of an untold number of deputation meetings--agricultural, money-raising, and registration--eighteen, for which reasonably complete speech texts are available, have been chosen for analysis.

From the weekly meetings, forty-three speech texts of Cobden, Bright, Moore, Fox, Colonel Thompson, and Villiers were chosen for analysis--again the number from each speaker corresponded to the ratio of the total the

speaker gave in the entire agitation. And from the deputation speaking, thirty-three speeches of Cobden, Bright, Moore, and Colonel Thompson were chosen for analysis. A total of seventy-six speeches are analyzed to determine the kinds of personal persuasion used by Richard Cobden, John Bright, R. R. R. Moore, Colonel Thompson, W. J. Fox, and Charles P. Villiers in their speaking for the Anti-Corn Law League.

### League Lecturers

#### Prior Impression

In 1838 neither the operative nor the middle class had any preconceived opinions concerning the anti-Corn Law lecturers, but the people did have some very definite ideas about political agitators. All four of the League lecturers faced opposition because of the prior opinion many audiences had that the lecturers were "paid men," or that they were Chartists. In other instances all four of the lecturers benefited from a report of the physical abuse they had suffered which proceeded them from town to town. The refusal of the use of a town hall for a lecture also aided the speaker in gaining a large, favorable hearing. The class standing of the lecturer seemed to have no correlation with his success in gaining a hearing for his arguments, nor did the close identification of the repeal movement with the manufacturing interests of Manchester



cause the lecturers excessive difficulties.

The Anti-Corn Law League hired as lecturers men from every class and background in society. Paulton, a medical student at the time he was hired by the League, was from the upper middle class. Sidney Smith was a newspaper editor and a solicitor, both respectable occupations. Acland had edited the North Cheshire Reformer, but he came to the League with the taint of his political agitations for the Reform Bill of 1832. In spite of his experience as a political agent and his pretensions to middle class tastes in living, Acland belonged to the working class. Murray was also of the working class, slightly lower in rank than Acland. McCord concluded that one of the reasons the first two lecture campaigns failed was because none of the lecturers enjoyed a standing or prestige sufficient to influence their audiences.<sup>1</sup> However, the goals of the first two campaigns must be examined before the character of the lecturers can be blamed as a chief agent in these failures. J. B. Smith did not or could not envision the mammoth assault on the parliamentary electors which would be necessary before the repeal of the Corn Laws was possible. The lectures of the first two campaigns were aimed first at all listeners, then to all electors. The lack of financial support also severely hampered the lecturers' first efforts. The broad base of

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 137.

support for repeal often enjoyed by later League deputa-  
tion speakers was built in these beginning campaigns by  
the lecturers at considerable expense of physical effort.  
Acland, for example, was not of the middle class yet he  
was successful in gaining a hearing for his arguments  
because of his knowledge of the question and his readiness  
to meet all comers in discussion. In gaining a hearing  
and in carrying the show of hands for repeal, Acland and  
Murray, the working class lecturers, were more successful  
than Smith and Paulton who had middle class standing.  
There seems to be no correlation between class standing  
and success of the lecturers in gaining a hearing; rather  
the correlation seems to be between the ability of the  
speaker and his success in gaining a hearing.

The close identification of the repeal movement  
with Manchester could have caused the lecturers con-  
siderable difficulty if they had not known how the basic  
arguments against the Corn Laws were equally applicable to  
the farm laborer and the operative. Evidence indicates  
that both Acland and Murray attempted to gain enough  
knowledge of the commercial and agricultural structure of  
the particular town in which they were to speak to enable  
them specifically to apply their arguments. Murray, after  
his first few months' lectures, was admonished to substi-  
tute the word "national" for "Manchester." The lecturers  
who could best adapt their arguments to all classes in all

districts were most successful in gaining a hearing for repeal.

Of the two problems of prior impression which were most troublesome to the lecturers, the suspicion that the lecturer was a "paid man" caused him the most difficulty. The Times gleefully reported the "miserable failure of the anti-corn law lecturer at Hythe," where Paulton supposedly had too much beer the night before his lecture and admitted to being paid 25s. per diem to agitate for the League.<sup>1</sup> Even allowing for the bias of The Times, the question of paid lecturers did come up often enough in the campaigns to trouble the speakers. Paulton apparently retorted that he had lectured for six months gratuitously before becoming a paid lecturer but he failed to gain any signatures for his repeal petitions. Even Acland was subjected to the questioning of his finances but, unlike Paulton, Acland had an acceptable if not entirely logical answer. At Hartwell Acland answered:

yes, he was paid, and he wished to know how his arguments could have been affected by that fact? Was not the minister paid and did his salary affect the truths advanced from the pulpit?<sup>2</sup>

The lecturers were continually faced with opposition because they were "paid men."

The second prior impression of the lecturers which

<sup>1</sup>The Times, May 25, 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, April 21, 1841.

caused them much difficulty was in being mistaken for Chartists. In the first 1838 tour J. B. Smith rationalized that being mistaken for Chartists would at least bring them working class support but the working class had neither money nor votes. In Paulton's 1839 tour of Scotland, while he fought the Chartists for the right of free discussion the moneyed class thought Paulton a Chartist and thus were not moved to contribute to the League. The Irish patriot, Steele, supported the magisterial plot to keep Murray from lecturing in Limerick because he thought Murray was a physical force Chartist. In general being mistaken for Chartists only brought the League lecturers more opposition particularly from the middle and upper classes.

Each of the lecturers benefited from the reports of physical violence they had suffered which circulated to most towns ahead of the lecturer's arrival. In his first 1839 tour Sidney Smith consistently used a narrative of violence episode as an introduction to his lectures. At Cambridge Smith began his first lecture by referring to the hostile treatment he and Shearman had received in the agricultural districts, then continued:

here I think I already feel that I can breathe more freely. I congratulate myself that for nearly the first time since I left Manchester I have set foot on a civilized territory and out of the country of British savages.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, May 28, 1839.

After Murray's month-long battle for the right to lecture in Limerick, he had no difficulty in getting large, attentive audiences for the remainder of his campaign in southern Ireland. The subsequent effect of violence episodes did create a sympathetic hearing for the League lecturers.

A third factor of prior impression which benefited the lecturers was the refusal of the use of the town hall for an anti-Corn Law lecture. This brought a number of free speech champions to the side of the lecturer and extended the sympathies of many who might not otherwise have supported repeal. The use of this refusal by the lecturers varied. Acland would mount a platform in the Market Place and vigorously denounce petty officialdom. Paulton reminded the audience, when he finally found a room for the lecture, of the traditional English virtue of free discussion. Both reactions worked to the advantage of the lecturer. The refusal of the use of a town hall for an anti-Corn Law lecture created more interest in that lecture than any number of placards could have created.

### Personal Persuasion

#### John Murray

John Murray's private reputation probably did little to enhance his personal persuasion; however, his skill in constructing an impressive argument against the

Corn Laws and his apparent simplicity were strong persuasive factors in his favor. John Murray was hired by the League in April, 1840. The report by Lawrence Heyworth to the Council recommending that Murray be hired gave three reasons for this recommendation: (1) Murray had an extensive and accurate knowledge of the effects produced by the Corn Laws; (2) Murray was a moral force, not a physical force Chartist; (3) Murray's private character was not marked except that he recently had become a keeper of a beer shop--his previous occupation was a vendor of books. A working class lecturer who asked for only £80 yearly salary, Murray used few personal appeals.

A quiet, sincere, hardworking man, Murray's strongest persuasion lay in his well developed arguments backed with many examples and statistics. Cobden described him as a "safe and prudent man whom you may trust."<sup>1</sup> After Murray was under interdict not to lecture in Limerick, a reporter from the Limerick Reporter gained admittance to the northumberland rooms after the second night's audience had been driven out. The reporter found Murray:

an active, intelligent, well-informed man and excellent tactician; and we could not but express our surprise that he should have been treated in the manner he was.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 73. Letter Cobden to Bright.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, November 19, 1840.

Several reports of Murray's lectures in the Circular list the single factor of his success as the "use of a vast deal of information,"<sup>1</sup> the use of "powerful illustrations of the evil workings of the Corn Laws," and of "solid convincing argument,"<sup>2</sup> and the use of "impressive arguments."<sup>3</sup> In his first lecture at Newry Murray spent the greater part of his speech developing a comparison of the wages in bushels of corn of sixteen trades in England and in Poland; in order that there might be no misunderstanding of the statistics, Murray cited his figures from Porter's Tables arranged for the British government on a seven year average.<sup>4</sup> Murray translated a thorough knowledge of his subject into well supported arguments for Corn Law repeal; he was honest and sincere, but did not include personal appeals in his arguments for repeal.

The most important factor contributing to Murray's personal persuasion was his forceful, earnest delivery. A Circular correspondent reported from Clitheroe that Murray's lecture:

was simple in its plan, and convincing in its argument, and was delivered with that force and earnestness which influence only those who believe the truth of what they speak. The lecturer convinced and informed his audience.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, September 24, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., August 27, 1840.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1840.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., May 21, 1840.

<sup>5</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, January 27, 1842.

Other reports stress the adjectives earnest and convincing, and energetic when they discuss Murray's delivery. From the materials available Murray emerges as a sincere, knowledgeable lecturer who combined well-developed arguments with a forceful, earnest delivery to persuade his hearers.

### Sidney Smith

Sidney Smith used only two kinds of personal persuasion effectively--his appeals to the highest possible authority, i.e., God, were well received as was his keen incisive wit with its strong emphasis on sarcasm and ridicule. Smith failed in the use of personal persuasion because of his failure to capitalize on his prior respectable position and because he could not talk extemporaneously but had to rely on reading his speeches from manuscript.

Sidney Smith was hired primarily because the League hoped the respectability of his former position as a solicitor would gain an attentive hearing for him. As has been previously discussed, Smith was subjected to the same disturbances and physical harassments as the working class lecturers. His respectability was of assistance only in the large cities such as Liverpool where educated middle class audiences could appreciate his style and understand his arguments. Unfortunately for Smith the proportion of middle class audiences during his first two lecture tours



was small in comparison to the working class operatives. Also as has been previously discussed Smith used a personal appeal introduction. He told his audience how badly he had been treated in other places, then hinted that at the present lecture he knew that people would listen quietly without disturbances. Sidney Smith's respectability did not restrain disturbers, but Smith was able to use a narrative of the physical abuse he suffered to gain the sympathy of subsequent audiences.

Sidney Smith effectively used an appeal to the highest possible authority, i.e., God, as he relied extensively on the religious and moral arguments against the Corn Laws. His appeals were to God's word which as manifested in the Bible, was irrefutable. Smith began his first lecture:<sup>1</sup>

God, who has revealed himself as our Father, hath made of one family all nations to dwell on the face of the earth . . . God knows no distinctions . . . the whole human race should be one family.

He continued noting that the fair abundance of the earth should be shared equally by all members of the family of mankind. In the introduction to the second lecture, Smith developed the antithesis of the appeal to the highest laws of God: Famine converts man into an animal; as an animal, man is ignorant; because man is ignorant, he will commit

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<sup>1</sup>The Anti-Corn Law Circular, June 11, 1839 and July 9, 1839 published two of Smith's lectures indicating that he gave these same speeches at each town with only a few minor additions for the local situation.

crimes. Thus Smith concluded that those responsible for the difficulty of procuring food were guilty of "sin and heinous immorality"; they were destroying the very elements of human nature in a "most cruel mockery." Smith relied heavily on appeals to the good and virtuous plans of God, i.e., he effectively associated himself with the highest possible, irrefutable authority. Those who opposed repeal were sinful and immoral quite unworthy of the support of good, honest Christians.

The one form of personal persuasion which Sidney Smith used with greater success than all his other emotional appeals was his keen, incisive wit with strong emphasis on sarcasm and ridicule. The one surviving critique of Sidney Smith's speaking was a letter from J. B. Smith to Sidney Smith:

Some critiques on your lectures have reached us from friendly quarters. I am sure you will see the importance when speaking of religion of avoiding any sectarian views and still more of conveying an impression of throwing ridicule upon it.--the State church is fair game but it may chance to offend or be misunderstood and is it not best to avoid references to it. Above all do not let the chosen foot be seen. Such is the ignorance and prejudices of the people that the fact of a man being a Sectarian is enough to destroy everything he says on any other subject.<sup>1</sup>

J. B. Smith objected equally to the moral argument and to the manner in which Sidney Smith phrased his appeals. The League could not afford to have any Christian church feel they were the object of a contemptuous, humorous

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<sup>1</sup>July 3, 1839.

disparagement. A report of Smith's lectures at Liverpool ended by enumerating the parts Smith excelled in as:

richness of wit, quaintness of his humour, the raciness of his style, his exhaustless fund of anecdote, his unequalled powers of mimicry, or the astounding and often appalling nature of the facts with which he illustrates and diversifies his subject.<sup>1</sup>

A report of Smith's lecture at Lancaster noted that "the wit with which he judiciously intermingled his arguments kept his audience alive for nearly three hours."<sup>2</sup> From Brighton a report on Smith read, "his style is clear, his wit and sarcasm are unrivalled."<sup>3</sup> Consistently the published reports of Sidney Smith's lectures included glowing tributes to his wit, sarcasm, or ridicule. From the speech texts available the constituents of Smith's wit are clear. He excelled in the biting gibes or cutting rebukes; for example, after the landlords announced they might be willing to reduce rents which were already about two hundred percent over actual value by some twenty percent, Smith asked, "This is generosity? Can anything be more noble or disinterested? Is this not highminded and generous?"<sup>4</sup> Smith rebuked Sir Robert Peel for deciding that the only way to insure the working man had enough food was to prevent him from having any. He attacked Lord Melbourne because the Lord had said the Corn Laws were so

<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, July 9, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., July 4, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., June 4, 1840.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 11, 1839.

difficult a subject they should not be discussed. Sidney Smith delighted friendly audiences with his scornful, taunting, sarcastic language.

Sidney Smith failed in effective personal persuasion with his audiences because he could not deliver his speeches extemporaneously. He was most successful when he was able to read his manuscript speech to a middle class audience. Letters in the Smith Corn Law Papers from Shearman indicated that Smith was not able, at least in the early years of the agitation, to talk to an audience freely. Shearman talked of the difficulty of arranging for Smith to lecture in towns where the large public rooms could not be rented because of Smith's difficulty in facing out-of-doors audiences. Shearman concluded "if he could talk away as I do, though the matter were not half so good, the effect would be a great deal more."<sup>1</sup> Acland, analyzing the League's Louth failures a week after Smith had been there, concluded that it was the lack of free and open discussion of the Corn Laws after the lecture which was the cause of the difficulty; if the proponents of the Corn Laws were given an opportunity to ask questions or to discuss they could more easily be brought to listen to the anti-Corn Law arguments. Smith's lectures to farm or operative audiences were not as successful in gaining support for repeal as were his speeches in the large

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<sup>1</sup>Letter Shearman to League, May 8, 1839.

towns. During the fourth agitation campaign the League reports of Smith's lectures contained references to some discussions and debates, thus it may be that Smith learned a more effective style of oral communication after the failure of his first two campaigns. Sidney Smith's inability to deliver a lecture extemporaneously and his resulting caution in agreeing to discuss and debate repeal with opponents hampered his effectiveness as a speaker.

#### A. W. Paulton

Among the reports of Paulton's lectures in the League newspapers, in the Smith and Wilson papers, and in the League Letter Book, there was no consistent evidence of Paulton's use of any type of personal persuasion to his particular advantage or disadvantage. For example, in the question of delivery, McCord cites Samuel Smile's testimony that Paulton read his lectures with little effect;<sup>1</sup> from Gloucester Paulton wrote Wilson that he was so vigorous in delivery that at the conclusion of the last evening's lecture "the perspiration ran off the cuffs of his coat in a stream."<sup>2</sup> Also there is some evidence Paulton edited the Anti-Bread Tax Circular; if his primary duties from 1841 to 1846 were to edit the League newspaper, this would explain the general lack of evidence

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>May 8, 1839.

regarding his speaking. One other fact may be important to an understanding of Paulton's non-personal persuasion. Paulton did not believe lectures were an effective form of persuading the populace to support repeal. From Newcastle he wrote Wilson:

I think far more attention should be paid by the League to the regular circulation of tracts. . . . This would produce more lasting effect than any other means. If I might advise in the matter--I would suggest that during the summer lecturing should in a great measure be suspended and that the money which would be spent in that way should be employed in deluging every district with a constant succession of pithy papers. . . . Lectures are the best means for arousing opinion and giving it an active form but the generative process may be more economically as well as more effectively conducted. Ten men judiciously chosen to perambulate every county and quietly circulate information would beget more power by the expenditure of £500 than by three times the amount spent in the more motly process of lecturing. . . .<sup>1</sup>

There is insufficient, consistent evidence available to suggest that A. W. Paulton used any type of personal persuasion to his advantage or disadvantage.

#### James Acland

James Acland relied more on personal persuasion than any of the other lecturers. Often Acland and his message became so intertwined that reporters found themselves responding first to the man then to his arguments. He achieved this reaction by exhibiting a thorough knowledge of his subject, through skillful refutation and delivery.

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<sup>1</sup>June 1, 1840.

Acland gained and exhibited a thorough knowledge of his subject. A correspondent for the Circular reported from Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire, that Acland's:

knowledge of the subject upon which he lectures is very extensive, and this was displayed to great advantage when questions were put to him by his opponents. Some of them were made to feel most effectively that they had not got a tyro to debate with but one who had studied the question and who is acquainted with all its complicated and important relations to public weal. . . .<sup>1</sup>

From Lauder, Berwickshire a correspondent commended Acland for his "varied stores of information."<sup>2</sup> The Bedford Reformer commented favorably on his thorough knowledge of the subject "in all its tortuous bearings. . . ."<sup>3</sup> As has been previously suggested there was some evidence that Acland painstakingly acquired this knowledge after he became a League lecturer. After lecturing one month he wrote to Wilson:

have the kindness to inform Mr. Cobden I am daily improving in my knowledge of the great question. I hope to master it ere long. I am sure my lectures have been each an improvement on the preceding.<sup>4</sup>

Acland gained a sympathetic hearing and impressed his hearers with his knowledge of the arguments for repeal of the Corn Laws.

Acland's forte in personal persuasion was in refutation or as he liked to call it "the full and fair

<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, May 12, 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., May 26, 1841.

<sup>4</sup>May 5, 1839.

discussion after the lecture."<sup>1</sup> His readiness of reply won Acland many friends. At Kirkcaldy as Acland finished explaining that oats had the smallest amount of nutriment of all grains, an operative called out, "the Scotch use oat cake for food, and look well with it." Acland promptly replied, "they do not from choice but from cheapness; they would prefer wheat, could they obtain it." This response was loudly cheered by the repealers.<sup>2</sup> The Leicestershire Mercury thought Acland a ready and powerful debater;<sup>3</sup> the North Devon Journal felt the unhesitating challenge of all opponents and the promptitude with which they are met secured Acland the general approval of his audiences.<sup>4</sup> Not only did Acland unhesitatingly meet all opponents, but he did so in a tactful, good-humored manner. The correspondent from Stony Stratford explained, "we could not but admire his unexampled self-possession, his imperturbability, his good temper, and readiness of reply."<sup>5</sup> The Circular reported that Acland carried everything before him at Horsham by "dint of argument, good temper and consummate tact."<sup>6</sup> The Aylesbury News concluded:

<sup>1</sup>Letter Acland to Wilson, May 19, 1839.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, March 12, 1840.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., December 31, 1840.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., May 28, 1839.

<sup>5</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, May 12, 1841.

<sup>6</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, September 3, 1839.



he is good tempered, and turns off impertinence or an insult in a jocular repartee, diverting the sneer from himself and directing the loud laugh of his audience to his ill mannered assailant.<sup>1</sup>

Acland loved a fight, a struggle, or a discussion; his ready, sincere, good-humored replies won many friends for repeal. Acland best described his own successes when he explained:

my lectures are not child's play. I hang the truth at the enemy until the justification exudes from every pore--not by velocity of words but by the earnestness of the appeal.<sup>2</sup>

Acland's delivery complemented his ability at refutation. The Oxford Chronicle reported:

Mr. Acland is a short, dark, thin person, wearing his hair very long. He appears to be between 40 and 50 years of age, active, fearless, and acute. His oratory is of a captivating style, interspersed with anecdotes, fables, and wit. We should esteem him clever and powerful on the hustings, and well fitted to address a promiscuous assemblage.<sup>3</sup>

Acland was a vigorous speaker but there was no evidence either to support or to deny Holyoake's report that "as a sort of outrider to the League," Acland charged into a town on market day on a white horse to take stalk of the strength of the enemy before Cobden and Bright arrived to speak.<sup>4</sup> Acland's combined ability in refutation and

<sup>1</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, May 12, 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Letter Acland to League, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, April 21, 1841.

<sup>4</sup>George Jacob Holyoake, Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900), pp. 226-227.

delivery is best summed up by the Staffordshire Examiner:

The peculiar ability of Mr. Acland in putting his points so clearly and with such force, tells with great effect on the more intelligent of the working men; whilst his earnestness and evident sincerity secures him not only attention but favour on the part of the audience.<sup>1</sup>

### League Leaders

#### Richard Cobden

Richard Cobden was the leader of the Anti-Corn Law League both in the country and in Parliament, and he was the League's chief speaker. Cobden was self-educated; his inquiring mind coupled with much traveling within England, to the continent, the near East, and to America, enabled him to form a basic philosophy regarding the possibility of perfecting man and his society. Cobden's early associations with trade and manufacturers gave him a practical outlook. He first advocated the establishment of British Schools, then he actively advocated the incorporation of Manchester. Finally in 1838 he joined a group of Manchester radicals to advocate the repeal of the Corn Laws. Richard Cobden relied mainly on argument and logical appeals in his anti-Corn Law speaking but he did not neglect personal persuasion. His personal appeals were in five areas: prior impression of his ability because of his reputation and experience as a speaker and his election in 1841 as a Member of Parliament, his use of himself

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<sup>1</sup>Anti-Corn Law Circular, February 6, 1840.

as an appeal, his treatment of opponents, his personal relationship with his audience, and his delivery.<sup>1</sup>

### Prior Impression

There was nothing in Cobden's early experience as a speaker to gain for him a reputation which would impress his anti-Corn Law audiences. His earliest speeches were probably made at Clitheroe on behalf of the education of the young in 1832. Cobden's reading of George Combe's

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Cobden was born June 3, 1804 in Dunford, Sussex. He attended a school in Yorkshire from 1814 to 1819. In 1819 he became a clerk in his uncle's warehouse in London. In 1825 Cobden was promoted to collecting and soliciting orders. Cobden and three friends began to sell calico goods on commission in 1828 and one year later opened a calico-printing shop at Sabden.

Using the pen name Libra, Cobden wrote several articles for the Manchester Times (about 1834). In 1835 he published a pamphlet England, Ireland and America which received excellent reviews. In 1838 Cobden was negotiating with Tait of Edinburgh to write an article on banking for Tait's magazine.

In 1833 Cobden went to Paris in search of calico designs. In 1834 he visited France and Switzerland. On May 1, 1835, he left Plymouth for a thirty-seven day visit to America. After a short illness in 1836, Cobden was advised to winter abroad; he left in October to visit Constantinople, Greece, Egypt, the western shores of Asia Minor, and France, returning in April, 1837. In August, 1838, Cobden spent a few weeks in Germany and stopped in Paris on his way home.

In 1837 Cobden was defeated at Stockport in a Parliamentary election. In 1838 he became active as a leader in the movement to incorporate Manchester.

In May, 1840, Cobden married Catherine Ann Williams then left on a summer wedding trip through France, Savoy, Switzerland, and Germany. He died on April 2, 1865 at his lodgings on Suffolk Street, London.

Above from: Morley, pp. 1-172; Dictionary of National Biography, IV, 604-610; Encyclopaedia Britannica, VI, 78-82.

Constitution of Man at this time led him to believe that character and motives might be modified by bodily organization and that man and society might be perfected. In 1836 John Bright went over to Manchester to ask Cobden to speak at Rochdale at an educational meeting; years later Bright remembered the clearness, the logic, and a conversational eloquence of the speaker. Cobden's early speeches were not completely successful; there were reports on one failure where Cobden was so nervous and confused he practically broke down during the speech. Cobden must have taught himself to speak during the campaign for the incorporation for Manchester for several reports of Cobden's speech of December, 1838, at Manchester Chamber of Commerce laud his finely developed argument. Richard Cobden had no formal speech training; his speaking ability was learned during his advocacy first for education then for the incorporation of Manchester.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until 1841 when Cobden was elected for Stockport that his name raised expectations in his audiences. The middle of the nineteenth century was not a democratic age; a man's chances for election to Parliament depended on his status, his influence, and his respectability. It was a considerable achievement for a Radical

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<sup>1</sup>The entire paragraph is from Morley, pp. 23, 41, 93, 117, 145, 189, 190.

manufacturer to gain a seat in the House of Commons.<sup>1</sup>

Cobden told his brother:

it is quite clear that I am looked upon as a Gothic invader, and the classicals will criticize me unmercifully. . . . Ultimately these attacks will only give me a surer foothold.<sup>2</sup>

Early in 1841 The Times began its attack on Cobden; in 1842 he was described as "a capering mercenary, an author of incendiary claptrap, and as a peripatetic orator."

Cobden was correct in his forecast that his reception in the House and by The Times would only build up a larger audience for his League speeches. In September 1841 Cobden told his brother, "my style of speaking pleases the gallery people and has attracted the notice of the radicals out of doors."<sup>3</sup> Any Member of Parliament would gain a certain amount of prestige from his position but Cobden was doubly blessed with his background as a radical manufacturer and with the attacks of The Times.

### Treatment of Himself

Richard Cobden relied extensively on logical appeals in his anti-Corn Law speaking thus it is interesting to note his specific and special treatment of himself as a persuasive appeal. He was honest and sincere, he used an "I come to seek good" introduction, he used his

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>September 27, 1841.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

personal experiences as authority in the agricultural meetings and he impressed his audiences with his depth of knowledge regarding repeal.

Richard Cobden was honest and sincere in his anti-Corn Law appeals. In 1843 he told a weekly meeting audience:

most of us entered upon this struggle with the belief we had some distinct class interest in the question, and that we should carry it by a manifestation of our will . . . against the will and consent of other portions of the community.<sup>1</sup>

But along with other Leaguers Cobden saw that the interests of all classes would be served by the repeal of the Corn Laws. He told another League audience, "if I were not convinced that the question comprises a great moral principle . . . I should not take part in the agitation as I do."<sup>2</sup> Cobden believed in repeal thus he gave his full time to its agitation. Cobden's honesty and sincerity were strong persuasive appeals. A chronicler for News of the World in searching for the elements of Cobden's character which brought him in 1845 to the pinnacle of radical leadership chose sincerity and a seeking not for himself, but for the people as the distinctive qualities of his leadership.<sup>3</sup> Even Cobden's severest critics such as The Times never raised their voices against Cobden's

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<sup>1</sup>October 19, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>September 28, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>December 28, 1845.

honesty.<sup>1</sup> Richard Cobden had a specific goal which he honestly and sincerely pursued; as one critic suggested, Cobden might well be called the "Archon at the Areopagus."<sup>2</sup>

In the agricultural meetings Cobden consistently used strong personal appeal with his "I come to seek good" introduction. At Taunton he began, "I come to seek good not evil."<sup>3</sup> Later at Colchester Cobden amplified his aims:<sup>4</sup>

Yet he ventured to meet gentlemen whose minds had been prejudiced against himself and his motives not only without dread of personal violence at their hands, but he might say he had done so as a total stranger unknown to any one of them, and he appeared before them with confidence that he should get that fair play and gentlemanly courtesy from the men of Essex which he knew Englishmen always gave to strangers. . . . Whatever they believed of him, he wished the tenant farmers not to suppose that he intended to deprive them of any protection, though he was called their enemy; and, though it was attempted to persuade them that he had come to that meeting to take something from them, he most flatly denied it, because he did not acknowledge that the corn laws gave them any protection. . . .<sup>5</sup>

From all the texts of the agricultural meetings available there was evidence that Cobden consistently used the "I

<sup>1</sup>Morley, p. 2.2.

<sup>2</sup>News of the World, March 23, 1845.

<sup>3</sup>April 8, 1843.

<sup>4</sup>Note as suggested in the introduction, this and several other texts are in the third person--the reporter tells what the speaker said.

<sup>5</sup>July 8, 1843.

come to do good" introduction.

Also in the agricultural meetings Cobden used his personal experiences as an authority. The illustration was usually developed as follows. The Corn Laws were a deception, a delusion, and a fraud. Cobden knew this because he was a farmer's son and if he had not left his father's farm he would be a very poor man. He still took a deep interest in the farmer's prosperity and he had an even greater degree of sympathy for the farmers than he had for the manufacturers. The farmer had double the interest in trade because many of his sons could not be supported on the farm but must go into business. Cobden told of the success of this appeal in a letter to his brother:

my declaration that I am a farmer's son seems to have told as I expected, and it is a point of too much importance not to be made the most of, even at the risk of being egotistical.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Cobden's personal persuasion reached a high with the impression he left his audiences of his depth of knowledge on the Corn Laws. Enormous amounts of information poured into the League offices each week; Cobden continually looked for a new illustration or a telling statistic. Lattimore supplied Cobden with many of his agricultural statistics. Morley summed up Cobden's facility, "where knowledge and logic were the proper

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<sup>1</sup>March 11, 1843.



instruments, Cobden was the master. He was not copious . . . but was neat and pointed."<sup>1</sup>

In February, 1843, Sir Robert Peel accused Cobden of threatening him with assassination. The League sprang to Cobden's defense; a special meeting was called for February 22 in London to show the League's faith in the Member for Stockport. For several months various towns sent lengthy petitions to Cobden expressing indignation at the charge and confidence in his honesty; the stronger local associations held teas or dinners to support Cobden. Undoubtedly, this imputation on Cobden's character did not tarnish his name but rather extended his influence and popularity.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Cobden was displeased with all the publicity; he wrote to Edward Baines:

we must avoid any of this individual glorification in the future. My forte is simplicity of action, hard working behind the scenes; I have neither the taste nor aptitude for these public displays.<sup>3</sup>

### Treatment of Opponents

From principle Cobden did not believe in personally attacking his opponents. He explained at a weekly meeting:

<sup>1</sup>Morley, pp. 195-196.

<sup>2</sup>Augustus Mongredien, History of the Free Trade Movement in England (London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1898), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>March 8, 1843.

I am not fond at any time of mixing up individualities in the advocacy of a great principle; but I am told that in London there is a taste for that which borders on personality in politics . . . we desire to give our attention to great principles, we shall find in the end that we shall have greater influence to advocate those principles the less we indulge in personalities.<sup>1</sup>

Nor did Cobden feel it wise to "assail those who are disposed to cooperate, however slightly. . . ." <sup>2</sup> He preferred to argue on principles alone but he was not always able to indulge his wishes during much of his weekly meeting speaking. The weekly meetings were held in London and for the forty-one speeches Cobden had to search "liberally through the topics of the day" <sup>3</sup> for new material. Since the League leadership was under constant attack both in the House and by the press, Cobden's weekly meeting speeches were primarily refutation. Much of this refutation was aimed at first the opposition, then the landlords and the county members of Parliament, and finally toward a few individuals such as the Duke of Richmond and Sir Robert Peel. Cobden was consistently moderate in his attacks on all opponents thus increasing his personal persuasion.

Cobden charged the opposition--a general term calculated to embitter the least number of people--with

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<sup>1</sup>March 15, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>Morley, p. 174.

<sup>3</sup>January 8, 1845.

assuming the cloak of humanity in order to deceive honest and not very shrewd people;<sup>1</sup> with strengthening an abominable unchristian system;<sup>2</sup> and with the most violent, the most bitter, and the most malignant plans.<sup>3</sup> The strongest condemnation Cobden could muster for the opposition was one of inconsistency.<sup>4</sup> The landlords or landowners received harsher treatment. Cobden called on the landlords to extricate themselves from the degrading dilemma of protection and asked if the landowners were content with "their sluggish indolence to draw from the impoverishment of the people."<sup>5</sup> Cobden was always careful to distinguish between the landowner and the farmers. He told one audience that the landlord was no more a farmer than a shipowner was a sailor,<sup>6</sup> and another that the only ones who attempted to interrupt League agricultural meetings were the landowners or landvaluers, i.e., the red-tape men.<sup>7</sup> What galled Cobden the most was the claim that the farmers rose spontaneously and formed an Anti-League Association. After asking for proof of just one respectable, intelligent farmer who had risen spontaneously against the League Cobden could find no words stronger than "the allegation is not true" in refutation.

<sup>1</sup>January 8, 1845.

<sup>2</sup>October 6, 1842.

<sup>3</sup>March 15, 1843.

<sup>4</sup>January 8, 1843.

<sup>5</sup>September 28, 1843.

<sup>6</sup>March 15, 1843.

<sup>7</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, June 13, 1843.

Cobden disliked the landowners but his distaste for the county Members of Parliament was stronger. In January, 1845, a particularly strong taunt by Mr. Hollingsworth brought out Cobden's sharpest rebuke. In generally describing the manufacturing politician (Cobden considered himself the specific example) Mr. Hollingsworth said:

He is probably a man who has made his own fortune by some lucky chance in trade. . . . He may be a good tradesman, may possess good, natural common sense, and by its exercise by frugality, and industry, have raised himself from sweeping a warehouse to become its master. But what then? What does he know beyond the walls of his own counting house? Totally uneducated, or with such information only as may be gathered from a village schoolmaster, what value would be set on that statesmanlike knowledge derived from experience and intercourse with the world.<sup>1</sup>

Cobden's reply was:

There are some 158 county members representing England and Wales in the House of Commons. Was there one of them . . . of whom they could say he is above mediocrity in talent? (They're below it.) There were not ten of them who ever opened their mouths in Parliament with a chance of being listened to unless to be laughed at. I have the highest respect for the advantages which the highest education would give to men of natural talent, but many of the county members can not even use correct grammar in a speech.<sup>2</sup>

Besides disliking the county Members' tastlessness Cobden accused them of fear--fear of meeting him on an open platform in their home country to discuss the repeal of the Corn Laws.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>January 8, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>January 8, 1845.

<sup>3</sup>July 3, 1844.

Cobden seldom spoke out against individual Members who criticized the League; he made an exception, however, for the Duke of Richmond. The Duke had the misfortune to suggest that the farmers had risen voluntarily to oppose the League. Cobden told a weekly meeting he had heard this untruth repeated so often he was afraid people would believe it.<sup>1</sup> The strongest denunciation Cobden could work up against the Duke was to tell him he did not know the language of his own country and needed to study English grammar if he was not aware that a farmer means a cultivator of land. Cobden had seen few cultivators of land as originators of anti-League sentiment. For reasons which have never been clear Cobden attacked Sir Robert Peel at the October 28, 1845, weekly meeting. In discussing Peel's power to open the ports and to repeal the Corn Laws to alleviate the famine, Cobden called Peel a "criminal and a poltroon" if he hesitated in stopping the suffering.

Cobden's last attack on Sir Robert Peel was severely criticized by several of his friends. In a letter to George Combe, Cobden explained the whole problem of weekly meetings and the necessity for his attacks:

You must not judge me by what I say at these tumultuous public meetings. I constantly regret the necessity of violating good taste and kind feeling in my public harangues. I say advisedly necessity, for I defy anybody to keep the ear of the public for seven years upon one question, without studying to amuse as well as instruct. People do not attend public

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<sup>1</sup>July 3, 1844.

meetings to be taught but to be excited, flattered, and pleased. . . . I have been obliged to use such appeals as to their self-esteem, their combativeness, or their humour. You know how easily in touching these feelings one degenerates into flattery, vindictiveness, and grossness. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Cobden's generous use of the terms "the opposition," "the landlords," and "the county members" were sufficiently general and inclusive to avoid personal insult. In the agricultural meetings Cobden's denunciation of the landlord was considerably softened from his attacks on the same group in the weekly meetings. In both the money-raising and the qualification deputation meetings Cobden seldom attacked any of the League enemies. Only in the weekly meetings did Cobden concentrate on retaliatory attacks on the League critics and even then his attacks were generally modified to harm no specific individual.

#### Relationship with His Audience

Part of Richard Cobden's personal persuasion came from a special relationship he established with the audience. Archibald Prentice, who heard many of Cobden's speeches during the anti-Corn Law agitation, summed up this relationship:

Here is a man who does not strain after effect--goes plainly on to instruct, not to excite--and is content to rest on its own intrinsic value without artificial adornment. And in this faith of his hearers, Cobden has his strength. . . . He convinces

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<sup>1</sup>December 29, 1845.

as he goes along, and with a simplicity and plainness which seem to render conviction irresistible.<sup>1</sup>

In the qualification and registration meetings Cobden took special care to activate his audience before he made his specific appeal. At Rochdale he told the audience:

in going some places to beg money one has to brace up one's nerves, and get up a face for the occasion; but when we come to Rochdale . . . I am always sure to be told the money has all been collected.<sup>2</sup>

At Leeds Cobden explained at length how the "intelligence, wealth, and power" in the audience indicated they were the most important constituency in the country. He neglected to add that the large number of members elected by Yorkshire could be decisive in a showdown on repeal in the House. Cobden switched tactics at Sheffield and warned the audience that Huddersfield would overtake Sheffield in qualifications if they did not get to work. These examples do not show a direct relationship Cobden had with his audiences but rather they show the keen sensitivity Cobden had to the forces which motivated his audiences.

### Delivery

Cobden's simple, forcible delivery strengthened his personal appeal to an audience. He was slight in frame and build with a large powerful head; his voice was clear,

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<sup>1</sup>Prentice, II, 60.

<sup>2</sup>November 20, 1844.

varied in tones, and penetrating.<sup>1</sup> His delivery was an impression of his entire personality--he was prompt, confident, never at a loss for words and he never hesitated. Prentice explained that Cobden did not "skulk the question but vigorously grappled with it at once. . . ."<sup>2</sup> A Scottish correspondent who heard Cobden, but who had sufficient distance to be objective gave the clearest description of Cobden's delivery:

Mr. Cobden is emphatically a natural speaker. His language is remarkably simple, correct, and forcible. He uses very little action, but without action, earnestness is apparent in every word he utters. His language is a pure well of English undefiled. His pronunciation generally is most correct, and is marked by one or two provincialisms which are not disagreeable, and seem indeed by giving character, to increase the effect of the speaker. . . . Mr. Cobden's great powers of mind are accompanied by a childlike simplicity of character.<sup>3</sup>

Cobden had the enthusiasm, patience, and good humor of an experienced speaker. He disclaimed being a mob orator:

it is an effort for me to speak in public. The applause of a meeting has no charm for me. . . . It would be a relief if I knew there was no necessity for my ever again appearing at a public meeting.<sup>4</sup>

### John Bright

John Bright was one of the principal speakers of the Anti-Corn Law League. He was educated at Quaker schools then joined his father's factory at Greenback. He

<sup>1</sup>Morley, pp. 192-193.

<sup>2</sup>Prentice, I, 169.

<sup>3</sup>Manchester Times, April 19, 1845.

<sup>4</sup>Morley, p. 208.



gained a reputation at Rochdale as a public speaker in education and temperance causes. From 1841 to 1846 he devoted his full time to the anti-Corn Law agitation, speaking at weekly meetings and as a member of the various county and borough deputations. Bright relied on emotional and personal appeals during most of his anti-Corn Law speeches. Before 1841 Bright was not unknown to League audiences, but his reputation as a speaker was largely local. Bright's character, his treatment of himself as an appeal, and his treatment of his opponents are the chief categories of his personal persuasion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Bright was born November 11, 1841 at Rochdale, Lancashire.

He attended school at the Quaker School at Ackworth in 1822, at the school of William Simpson of York in 1825, and a school at Newton in 1825. He was a constant reader of poetry, history, biography, and the Bible.

In 1833 Bright assisted in the founding of the Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society. From 1834 to 1841 he helped in the Rochdale fight against church rates.

In 1833 Bright made a short visit to the continent and in 1835-36 he visited Lisbon, Malta, Syria, Athens, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Alexandria.

From 1838 until 1841 Bright made a few appearances for the Anti-Corn Law League. On February 2, 1839, he addressed a Rochdale anti-Corn Law meeting. He attended the Bolton dinner for Paulton and was a delegate to the January, 1840, conference in Manchester. In April, 1840, Bright addressed 2,000 at a Manchester League meeting.

On November 11, 1839, Bright married Elizabeth Priestman. She died September 10, 1841. Bright then gave his full time to the League agitation.

Bright died on March 27, 1889 at his home, One-Ash, Rochdale.

Above from: Robertson; Trevelyan; Dictionary of National Biography, XXII, 273-291; Encyclopaedia Britannica, VI, 567-570.

### Prior Impression

In 1841 John Bright did not enjoy a national reputation as a speaker thus the prior impression of him held by most of his audiences was insignificant in their assessment of him. Bright's first speeches were given about 1830 in support of the temperance movement. It has been suggested that as a member of the Rochdale Juvenile Temperance Band Bright first learned to speak by going out into the villages, borrowing a chair from a cottager, and speaking to an open-air meeting.<sup>1</sup> After the founding of the Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society Bright was an active participant in the Society's debates. Also in 1833 after J. S. Buckingham, M. P. for Sheffield, finished a course of lectures in Rochdale, Bright impressed his townsmen with a short pithy speech of thanks. Bright entered the League agitation with some experience as a speaker but his reputation extended only to Rochdale.

From 1845 to 1846 Bright enjoyed the prestige of his Membership in Parliament for Durham. This was particularly useful to him in gaining a hearing at the agricultural meetings in the summer of 1843.

### Character

John Bright had several character defects which tended to alienate his middle and upper-class, respectable

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<sup>1</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica, VI, 567.

League audiences thus lowering his effective personal persuasion. Cobden acknowledged his receipt of several criticisms of Bright,<sup>1</sup> and took every chance to recount Bright's successes to Wilson who was in turn to pass on the word of Bright's abilities to any doubters.<sup>2</sup> Bright, himself, admitted to Cobden that "there were incapacities about him but he was unaware of the extent to which he had offended and frightened some of his middle-class colleagues."<sup>3</sup> All the League leaders suffered abuse and attack particularly from The Times, but Bright's alienation of the influential and moneyed supporters of the League was more serious.

Bright worked hard for the League. At times he was afraid his voice was permanently damaged because of the exhaustion caused by overuse.<sup>4</sup> Bright was sincere and held fast to his principles. The London correspondent for the Scotsman described him as:

stern, uncompromising friend of truth and scorner of sham and conventionalities, of a warm temperament which gives a fervour to his eloquence, and impels him to say always what he thinks.<sup>5</sup>

Another described Bright as follows:

<sup>1</sup>Letter Cobden to Wilson, February 11, 1845.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., February 28, 1845.

<sup>3</sup>Letter Bright to Cobden, September 20, 1845.

<sup>4</sup>Ausubel, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Manchester Times, April 19, 1845.

There was nothing vague or indecisive about the John Bright who came into prominence by the early 1840's. Proud of the Society of Friends, of Lancashire, and of the industrial--and industrious--classes, he had a powerful and rare sense of identity. He knew what was wrong with other countries. He also knew what was wrong with his own. And he knew what should be done about it.<sup>1</sup>

Bright suffered not from a lack of principles rather he was inflicted with excesses by those very principles he held most important. Bright's temper led him to indiscreet revelations.<sup>2</sup> Some found him unduly strong-minded, argumentative, tactless, reckless, and aggressive.<sup>3</sup> One critic complained, "there is more of pertness than of self-possession of a glib shopman's shrewdness, of cunning rather than sagacity in him."<sup>4</sup> The same critic concluded that Bright would be more useful to the cause if he practiced a little more diffidence even if he had to assume a virtue which he did not have. Others criticized Bright for his impetuosity,<sup>5</sup> his impatience,<sup>6</sup> and his intolerance. Bright's extreme bitterness at the landlords "caused a superfluous bitterness of personal invective" in his speeches.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to the town clerk of

<sup>1</sup>Ausubel, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Mongredien, p. 94; Manchester Times, April 19, 1845.

<sup>3</sup>Ausubel, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>News of the World, June 2, 1844.

<sup>5</sup>McCord, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup>Morley, p. 194.

<sup>7</sup>Mongredien, p. 94.

Stockport, Cobden explained the idiosyncrasies of his friend:

he [Bright] is not exactly approved by the influential men--in fact, he takes no pains to conciliate people of his own rank, and if they do not know him thoroughly as I do, they think him arrogant and supercilious. . . .<sup>1</sup>

John Bright was a sincere, hard-working, principled speaker with a strong sense of individual identity but excesses of recklessness, tactlessness, bitterness, and impatience alienated his middle and upper-class audiences. Since these classes contributed the money and bought the qualifications so necessary to the League's success Bright's failure in personal persuasion was significant.

#### Treatment of Himself

John Bright relied heavily on personal appeals in his anti-Corn Law speeches. In agricultural meetings Bright had a special sequence of illustrations which always ended with him giving personal proof of the League's intentions. He consistently repeated this sequence at various agricultural meetings.<sup>2</sup> First Bright brought out the attacks on the League in the local area. In Salisbury he explained:

many things have been done by certain parties to induce you to suppose that the Anti-Corn Law League

<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>April 8, June 17, May 13, September 18, 1843.

was a merciless and farmer-devouring association, anxious only to destroy the landowner, the tenant, and the labourer.<sup>1</sup>

Second Bright explained how the League only wanted justice. At Salisbury the transition and the third point followed:

And are we treating you now as if we despised or feared or hated you? Are we not here among you entire strangers? For there is not one solitary individual in this vast assembly that I have any acquaintance with of longer standing than during the past half-hour; and is it not proof that we have formed a high opinion of your intelligence, kindness, and fair dealing, and your honesty, that I have ventured thus unknown and unattended into your county to promulgate opinions once most distasteful to you, but which I believe to be essential to your well-being and to the very existence of our common country.<sup>2</sup>

Bright's agricultural assignment was fulfilled primarily with the use of personal appeal to justice in the sequence: (1) The League has been attacked, (2) We ask only justice, and (3) I give personal proof of our intentions.

Bright's personal persuasion also consisted of assurances that he and the League wanted only what was good and best for the people. The kinds of good varied. The League worked solely for peace;<sup>3</sup> for justice;<sup>4</sup> it never sought power, place, or station.<sup>5</sup> The League relied on facts; it wanted the people to be free.<sup>6</sup> The League

<sup>1</sup>August 8, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>November 24, 1842.

<sup>5</sup>February 19, 1845.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>December 12, 1844.

<sup>6</sup>June 18, 1845.

had been trusted and although it may have blundered, it had only wished to do honestly and wisely.<sup>1</sup> Few of these statements were supported with further illustration; there was a feeling that Bright meant himself when he talked of the League or we. He had tried honestly even though he had blundered. His repeated assurances of the League's honest aims were a consistent feature of his weekly meeting speeches.

### Treatment of Opponents

Bright used his weekly meeting speeches to severely criticize all the critics and landowners he could cover in the allotted time or those with whom he was currently most angry. The vehemence and frequency of these attacks damaged Bright's personal appeal.

Bright's attacks on his opponents took several forms. He claimed the monopolists were deceiving themselves, that the landlords had falsely betrayed their country,<sup>2</sup> and that the position of the landowner was pitiable.<sup>3</sup> Bright frequently attacked the Standard. One night he traced the lineage of the Standard's editor and found he came from an island not far away. Bright concluded that the editor gave the lie to the proverb that

<sup>1</sup>October 28, 1845.

<sup>2</sup>December 12, 1844.

<sup>3</sup>June 18, 1845.

that island had never produced anything of the reptile species.<sup>1</sup> Another evening Bright accused the Quarterly Review of publishing seventy pages of insult and scurrility. Bright recounted to a weekly meeting in 1845 that he had told them in the House of Commons the other night they ought to put a sign over their door with this inscription upon it, "British farmers regularly taken in and done for." At this same meeting Bright continued a scathing attack on the Duke of Buckingham for receiving a garter for what use Bright could not imagine and on the Duke of Richmond whose brother held two positions simultaneously in the army and thus was paid twice. After a few quips on a favorite League target--Sir Edward Knatchbull--Bright lit into Mr. Stafford O'Brien whom Bright thought could bear with credit the stupendous responsibilities of a man milliner; he concluded, "all protection is a robbery."<sup>2</sup> Bright used sarcasm and ridicule to attack League enemies particularly the landowners. These attacks occupied over fifth percent of each weekly meeting speech and severely damaged Bright's personal appeal with the upper classes.

### Delivery

John Bright's forceful, commanding delivery was one of the few positive factors in his personal persuasion.

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<sup>1</sup>July 3, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>February 19, 1845.



During the anti-Corn Law agitation Bright possessed some of the forceful, pleasing characteristics of delivery which marked his later speaking. A contemporary summed up his impressions of Bright's delivery:

Mr. Bright speaks well, and with great fluency, amounting when he warms with his subject, to extreme rapidity. There is no appearance at such times of that quiet and deliberate manner which we are generally accustomed to associate with the name of a Quaker; he becomes earnest and impassioned, as one entirely filled and occupied with his subject. . . . His voice is good; his enunciation distinct, and his delivery free from any unpleasant peculiarity or mannerism. Mr. Bright is about middle size, rather firmly and squarely built, with a fair, clear complexion, and an intelligent and pleasing expression of countenance. He is young and has apparently a long career before him; his dress is rather more recherche than that of the 'Friends' of a generation back, differing but slightly from the ordinary costume of the day.<sup>1</sup>

John Bright was an enthusiastic speaker who had no voice faults or mannerisms to detract from his message.

#### Robert Ross Rowan Moore

R. R. R. Moore, as he was called in the League newspapers, was one of the principal speakers of the League deputation meetings in the counties and boroughs from 1842 to 1846. Moore was a barrister from Dublin who became interested in political economy. Because Moore was not from the Manchester area he was unknown to most of his early anti-Corn Law audiences. Moore relied heavily on argument supported with large amounts of examples and

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<sup>1</sup>Illustrated London News, October 7, 1843.

statistics in his repeal speeches. His style of speaking was in some ways similar to Cobden's in its well-ordered argument and clear, concise style. Moore did not believe in arguing personalities but when faced with the same problem of refutation as Cobden and Bright he combined large amounts of argument with selected personal persuasion in both his weekly meetings and agricultural meeting speeches. Moore suffered in the beginning of his anti-Corn Law speeches because some thought him only a "paid lecturer," but his superior ability at refutation combined with an effective delivery soon gained a hearing for him.<sup>1</sup>

### Prior Impression

R. R. R. Moore had problems gaining a hearing with some audiences in 1842 and 1843 because he was mistaken

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Ross Rowan Moore was born December 23, 1811 at Dublin, Ireland. In 1828 he was sent to Luxemburg School near Dublin; in 1831 he entered Trinity College, Dublin and graduated with a B.A. in 1835. He spoke regularly at the Dublin University Debating Society and was one of the chief opponents of his friend Thomas Osborne Davis. He was called to the bar as a member of Gray's Inn on April 28, 1837.

On August 15, 1839 Moore gave a lecture on the advantages of Mechanic's Institutions which was later published. He was a member of the Irish anti-slavery society. Moore's first important speech on free trade was at a meeting in Dublin, December 23, 1841 when he moved a resolution in favor of the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws.

On January 1, 1845 Moore married Rebecca Fisher and took up residence in Manchester. He died August 6, 1864 at Bath.

Above from: Dictionary of National Biography, XIII, 825-826; Modern English Biography, II, 953.

for a paid League lecturer and because few knew of his background and class standing. Moore had no reputation in the Manchester area when he first spoke for the League. At Colchester he was greeted with loud cries of "no paid men" from the Corn Law party as he got up to speak. After Harbottle, a Leaguer, obtained enough quiet for Moore to continue he quietly asserted, "I have never been paid nor do I intend to be."<sup>1</sup> The Circular of July 18, 1843, felt it necessary to scold those who accused Moore at Colchester and feigned surprise that "the learned gentleman should have condescended to reply to the charge."<sup>2</sup> At Guilford Moore wove a little emotional appeal into his answer to a farmer who asked how much Moore was paid by the League. Moore replied that:

he was not paid at all; that he gave his time freely to the cause; that the people whose bread was taken from them by the Corn Laws were his clients; and without any fee he would advocate their cause until it was won.<sup>3</sup>

By the late months of 1843 Moore's careful grasp of the question and his large amount of illustrative material won for him a reputation as a strong advocate of repeal. By 1844 Moore was called for at weekly and deputation meetings as often as the other principal League speakers. In January the freedom of the borough of Cupar was conferred

<sup>1</sup>July 8, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>July 18, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>July 1, 1843.

on both Cobden and Moore. In March, 1844, Moore contested and lost an election for Parliament at Hastings. After 1843 Moore was generally accepted as a principal speaker of the Anti-Corn Law League.

### Refutation

R. R. R. Moore used little personal persuasion; he conducted his refutation in moderate terms which gained the respect of his audiences. He explained his philosophy regarding the attack of individuals in a weekly meeting in 1844:

I have here the answers to two memorials from constituents to their members. I wish it to be observed that in reading these documents and in any remarks I may make upon them. I am not to be understood as using a word harshly or disrespectfully to either of these gentlemen. I am speaking of the question and not of the men . . . those who worked against us will be brought to acknowledge that after all, we were right. The worst I wish them is that they may live long enough to feel the burning flash of shame rise high in their faces when any one points to the country's prosperity, and says, 'Free Trade won it-- a few men laboured long and earnestly in the cause and you held them back. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Moore was always careful to distinguish between the principle and the man. At Tower Hamlets he carefully explained he did not refer to the evils of the landlord but to the system of landlordism.<sup>2</sup> Because Moore did not believe in attacking men and because he was assigned the refutation of the League's attackers, he adopted a middle course

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<sup>1</sup>June 5, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>December 3, 1844.

which stressed arguments.

Moore constantly referred to the opposition in moderate terms thus enhancing his personal appeal with the middle and upper-classes. The men who originally passed the Corn Laws were selfish, and dishonest.<sup>1</sup> The land-owning landlords were shortsighted<sup>2</sup> and were doing wrong.<sup>3</sup> The strongest term Moore could find for the landlord was "men-degraders."<sup>4</sup> He was no more effusive about his own cause than he was derogatory about the opponent's.

Moore also refused to turn on an individual opponent. Baring, M. P. for Huntingdon, loudly called the League qualification campaign unconstitutional. Moore wanted to know if Mr. Baring meant it was unconstitutional to spread knowledge and denounce corruption?<sup>5</sup> Mr. Ferrand spoke of receiving a petition signed by 25,000 stocking weavers of Nottingham, Leicester, and Derby. Moore noted that Mr. Ferrand may have received the petition but there were only 16,000 stocking frames in the entire country. Sir John Tyrrell quoted from a previous speech of Moore's that out of 1,000 children born in the poorer districts of Manchester 570 die in the first days of their infancy; then reminded Moore that the miserable clothing and the lack of shelter caused these deaths. Moore rose to remind

<sup>1</sup>May 3, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>June 5, 1844.

<sup>3</sup>May 13, 1843.

<sup>4</sup>June 5, 1844.

<sup>5</sup>April 24, 1844.

Sir John that he left out the important fact that these children died because they had no food.<sup>1</sup> Moore relied totally on refutation of evidence and argument; with the former he gained a favorable hearing in his agricultural speeches.

### Delivery

The little evidence available regarding Moore's delivery suggests that his voice may have been his chief personal appeal. One Circular report talked of Moore's "warmth and zeal which so eminently characterized his countrymen."<sup>2</sup> Holyoake gave the following, vivid description of Moore's delivery:

Finally there came the collection maker of the League, R. R. R. Moore, with a voice that fell on a meeting like the bursting of a reservoir. It was not what he said, so much as the sound he made, that produced the effect. The maddest clamour was not hushed--it was overwhelmed by the new roar, which was always reserved to the end of the meeting. His function was to appeal for subscriptions, and he exactly answered that end, for when his astounding voice fell upon the meeting no one seemed to have the power of going away.<sup>3</sup>

Several points must be remembered in evaluating the above. Holyoake heard Moore speak thus his recollections were based on primary observation. Also Bright appended the following to Holyoake's description:

<sup>1</sup>July 8, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, February 10, 1842.

<sup>3</sup>Holyoake, p. 228.

his speeches were often logical and very good. The description of his voice is greatly exaggerated. He worked hard and was of great service to the League.<sup>1</sup>

A study of Moore's speeches revealed strong argument and evidence which suggests Holyoake's basic premise, that Moore's voice was his greatest asset, was inaccurate. There can be no other conclusion that there is insufficient evidence now available to describe Moore's delivery.

### Colonel Thomas Perronet Thompson

Colonel Thompson was a principal speaker for the Anti-Corn Law League. He made extensive tours with Cobden, Bright, and Moore for money raising purposes and he made several Bazaar tours with Moore. The Colonel had a long history of agitation experience particularly with the Chartists before he joined the League. He was heartily despised by many of the middle-class League electors and some of the League leaders treated him as a retainer, but Cobden consistently took the Colonel with him on deputation visits. Colonel Thompson was a sincere, honest man who relied on the use of personal experience as evidence in his speeches.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Holyoake, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Perronet Thompson was born at Hull on March 15, 1783, the eldest of three sons of Thomas Thompson, a merchant and banker of Hull who represented Midhurst in the House of Commons from 1807 to 1818.

Thompson attended Hull grammar school; in 1798 he was sent to Queen's College, Cambridge. In 1802 he graduated with a B.A. and was appointed midshipman on the

### Prior Impression

When Colonel Thompson joined the League in 1841 he had a reputation as a long-time repeal advocate and as an effective agitation speaker but the Colonel alienated many middle-class League electors by contesting the 1839 parliamentary vacancy at Manchester. In 1822 Thompson joined the circle of the philosophical radicals and in 1824 he contributed an article to the first number of the Westminster Review. In 1836 he published True Theory of Rent in support of Adam Smith against Ricardo. In 1827 he published his Catechism on the Corn Laws which was well received and went through eighteen editions before 1834. For his publication of the Catechism Thompson was elected

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Isis, the flagship of Vice-Admiral Gambier, who commanded the Newfoundland station. In 1806 Thompson joined the 95th rifles as a second lieutenant. He was captured by the Spaniards at Buenos Ayres on July 5, 1807. After short imprisonment he was set free, and in 1808 he was appointed governor of the colony of Sierra Leone, through the influence of Wilburforce, a friend of his father's. Thompson's efforts to suppress the apprenticeship system were so poorly received, he was recalled in 1810. He joined the 14th light dragoons in Spain as a lieutenant. For his part in the battles of Neville, Nive, Orthes, and Toulouse, Thompson received a peninsular medal. On the conclusion of peace he changed to the 17th light dragoons and arrived in Bombay, India in 1815. He took part in the 1818 campaign which destroyed the Pindaris of Central India, and in the expedition against the Wahabees. In November, 1820, Thompson and some friendly Arabs were defeated near Soor. As a result of the court-martial, Thompson was honorably acquitted on personal charges but reprimanded for undertaking the expedition with so small a force. In 1822 he returned permanently to England. In 1829 Thompson became a lieutenant colonel of infantry, unattached.

Above from: Dictionary of National Biography, XIX, 704-707; Modern English Biography, III, 941.



a fellow of the Royal Society in 1828. In 1830 he published Geometry without Axioms which gained favorable recognition in France. Colonel Thompson bought the Westminster Review in 1829 and before he transferred the Review to William Molesworth in 1836 he wrote over a hundred articles. Thompson published a six volume collection of his writings, and Cobden collected the most telling extracts from Thompson's writings in favor of free trade for publication by the League. This latter publication made Colonel Thompson's name familiar throughout the country. By the time the Colonel became active as a speaker in 1841, he had an established literary reputation.

Thompson enhanced his personal persuasion by gaining the prestige of a Member of Parliament. In January, 1835, Thompson contested an election at Preston for a seat in the Commons, but was defeated. In June, 1836, he was returned at Hull and joined Grote, Molesworth, and Warburton of the philosophical radicals in the House. In 1837 he was defeated at Maidstone by Wyndham Lewis and Disraeli. Thus Colonel Thompson came to the League with the prestige of being a former Member of Parliament.

When he joined the League Colonel Thompson enjoyed the reputation as an effective speaker. Thompson began his agitation speaking career during his election campaign at Hull in 1835. Of his speaking at Hull, his son wrote:

My father wrote his address last night; I think it is very good. . . . He speaks very well, so clearly

and so fluently that when reported (which they do verbatim) his speech reads like an article out of Westminster Review. His voice is very weak now and hoarse (from speaking) which is against him. He spoke four times on Monday, and twice yesterday. I think every speech is better (for electioneering) than the preceding one, as he amuses the people more, now that he has less to say on dry matters. . . . He is very popular.<sup>1</sup>

As a radical member of the House, Thompson seldom spoke but consoled himself with writing weekly letters to his constituents in Hull. Colonel Thompson's failure as a speaker in the House was attributed by his biographer to his failure to meet opponents on common ground before he launched into one of his novel schemes.<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Thompson was a frequent speaker at the London Working Men's Association meetings. In 1836 he broke with the Whigs and in a speech on January 4, 1838 accused the government of aggression and treason in the Canadian civil war. By this speech Colonel Thompson lost what little electoral support he once had and even the philosophical radicals deserted him in the Marylebone election. In a speech at a radical demonstration at Hull on October 15 Thompson claimed he was deliberately kept out of Parliament by two members of the London Anti-Corn Law Association--Hume and Ewart. From this time forward Colonel Thompson became more and more a spokesman for independent radicalism.

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<sup>1</sup>Johnson, pp. 194-195.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

In 1838 Colonel Thompson identified himself with the Chartists; he was a featured speaker at a meeting held in New Palace Yard to inaugurate a new Charter movement in London. Ebenezer Elliot, the Corn Law Rhymer, wrote the following verses about Thompson's speech at Palace Yard:

Who is that small Napoleon-featured pleader?  
 The sage, whose metaphors are demonstrations;  
 The bard, whose music yet shall teach all nations  
 That ignorance is want, war, waste, and treason;  
 Thompson, the Haydn and Moliere of reason  
 Clear-voiced as evening's thristle, o'er the booming  
 Of conscious forests heard when storms are coming  
 He stills those thousands, like a people's leader.<sup>1</sup>

From the founding of the League until 1841 Colonel Thompson was active in the London Anti-Corn Law Association while trying to explain the repeal agitation to the Chartists.

In his excessive zeal to gain a seat in Parliament for the independent radicals Colonel Thompson alienated many of the middle class League electors by contesting a vacancy at Manchester in 1839. The details of Thompson's involvement in the Manchester election are unknown but the middle class Leaguers believed him guilty of putting personal vindictiveness ahead of Corn Law repeal and some of them never forgave him.

Colonel Thompson did not enjoy the confidence of the League leaders but he was popular with the majority of radical reformers. The leadership of the League, all

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<sup>1</sup>Johnson, p. 224.

considerably younger than the Colonel did not show him the respect he felt he deserved; they often treated him as though he were a "callow subaltern."<sup>1</sup> In his weekly meeting speeches, Thompson frequently mentioned that before he got up to speak someone told him to be short about it for there were other important speakers to be heard.<sup>2</sup> Also the Colonel reported his Scottish admirers expressed surprise in 1845 that he should be sent on so menial a task as the Bazaar tour.<sup>3</sup> Colonel Thompson was never a leader in the League; he gave only nine weekly meeting speeches. Nevertheless, Cobden consistently took the Colonel along on money raising and qualification deputation visits.

### Character

A large amount of Colonel Thompson's personal appeal lay in the impression he gave of simplicity, honesty, sincerity, and lack of fear. In refusing to brand the monopolists dishonest until he had proof, the Colonel asked a weekly meeting audience to believe in his own integrity.<sup>4</sup> For another audience he recounted the story he heard that only dramatic entertainments should be held in theatres; he offered to play Bluebeard or Timour the Tartar but concluded that the League speakers appeared

<sup>1</sup>Johnson, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>April 10, 1845; June 1, 1844.

<sup>3</sup>April 15, 1845.

<sup>4</sup>April 20, 1844.

as he did in their simple characters.<sup>1</sup> The Colonel looked at all the League opponents and told them not one of them made him afraid the Corn Laws would not be repealed.<sup>2</sup> One critic, while concluding that the Colonel was a flop as a Member of Parliament, had to admit he was a very honest man. Whatever else he may have been Colonel Thompson was sincere and honest.

### Treatment of Himself

Colonel Thompson relied heavily on the use of his personal experience as evidence in his anti-Corn Law speeches. He told one audience that eighteen years ago he bestirred himself in the great cause of Corn Law repeal and only nine years ago he was doing what he could in the House; thus he was their long, trusted friend.<sup>3</sup> At a money raising meeting at Bury Colonel Thompson explained the usefulness of his personal experience.

It struck him while listening to the arguments of the foregoing speakers that he could strengthen many of their arguments from experience. If he were anything, he might call himself a landowner, yet he could not call to mind that he had any such strong interest in the maintenance of this law. Supposing for argument, that he might suffer a trifle by total repeal, yet, as the father of a family with all the professions into which there was a wish to send them glutted, he had a much greater interest in the liberalizing of trade from its fetters that there might be an opening for them to earn their bread by honest and honourable industry.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>December 2, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>February 4, 1844.

<sup>3</sup>April 10, 1845.

<sup>4</sup>January 4, 1844.

In using his personal experience Colonel Thompson took from his life as a soldier, as a Member of Parliament, and as a radical. The majority of the appeals used in any one of the Colonel's speeches were based on his personal experience.

### Delivery

Colonel Thompson's delivery was not a particularly effective element of his personal persuasion. The Colonel was a plain-spoken candid speaker.<sup>1</sup> His personal appearance in 1836 was described as:

short and stout. He dresses plainly. He generally wears a blue coat. His complexion is a mixture of red and fair. His face is large, and has something of the oval form. His hair is beginning to grey.<sup>2</sup>

Early in his career he suffered hoarseness and loss of voice from prolonged speaking, but his nightly addresses in two or three week tours for the League indicated he must have at least partially solved his problem. His children reported he tried to imitate the tones of voice of the great actors he had seen or heard.

### William Johnson Fox

William Johnson Fox, a former Unitarian minister and popular London radical speaker was hired by the League

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<sup>1</sup>News of the World, August 31, 1845.

<sup>2</sup>Random Recollections of the House of Commons (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1836), p. 366.

in 1843.<sup>1</sup> From 1843 to 1846 Fox spoke frequently at League weekly meetings and occasionally accompanied a League deputation to a county meeting. As was noted in the introduction to this study Arthur Miller completed a study of the twenty-two speeches of Fox during the Corn Law agitation. Although the bulk of Miller's analysis was of disposition and style according to Blair, there was a short analysis of Fox's use of ethical proof. This study will summarize Miller's findings on personal persuasion and elaborate only where differences in analysis occur.

### Prior Impression

Miller found that Fox was well received by League audiences and rapidly gained a position of a popular weekly meeting speaker because he came to the League as a "mature, experienced orator, writer, editor and critic."<sup>2</sup> Fox studied at the Independent College, Homerton and took

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<sup>1</sup>The arrangements between the League and Fox were strictly on a business basis. Cobden wrote to Wilson that he supposed they might have "Fox's pen and tongue by paying for them." June 21, 1843. Fox, after agreeing to write and speak for the League, wrote, "the League office is become perfectly horrible since the main body of the Goths and Vandals came down from Manchester; it is worse than living in a factory. . . ." Richard Garnet, The Life of W. J. Fox (London: John Lane, 1909), p. 268. Fox was paid £20 per address and an undetermined amount for fifty-eight "Letters on the Corn Laws" by a Norwich Weaver-Boy which appeared in the League from October 5, 1844 to March, 1846. Garnet, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, p. 25.

charge of a congregation at Fareham in 1820. By March, 1812, Fox had broken with orthodoxy and became a Unitarian minister at Chichester. He published several sermons under the title On the Duties of Christians toward Deists. Fox wrote dramatic reviews for the Retrospective Review. He was an editor of the Monthly Repository, the leading Unitarian periodical, until 1831 when he bought the copyright and made the Repository an organ of political and social reform combined with literary criticism. At this time Fox published two additional volumes of sermons. During the 1832 reform agitation he addressed open-air meetings in Lincoln's Inn Field daily. Fox published his Finsbury Lectures in 1840. In 1835 Fox wrote for the True Sun; in 1837 he joined the staff of the Morning Chronicle where among other things he reviewed the performances of Macready. From 1844 to 1846 Fox gave a series of Sunday evening lectures to the working classes at the National Hall, Holborn. W. J. Fox was a popular speaker with the London middle and working class audiences before he joined the League agitation.<sup>1</sup>

#### Treatment of Self and Opposition

Fox's moral fervor or boldness<sup>2</sup> and his sincerity<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Miller's account is supplemented with that from the Dictionary of National Biography, VII, 577-578.

<sup>2</sup>Garnett, p. 263.

<sup>3</sup>Miller, pp. 32, 42.



were strong factors in the personal persuasion of his anti-Corn Law speaking. Fox continually combined his cause with a Christian obligation. For example, he concluded one of his first League speeches with:

we pledge ourselves to it as to a religious covenant; and we swear by Him who liveth for ever and ever that this egregious folly of the Corn Laws, this foul wrong, this atrocious inequity shall be entirely abolished.<sup>1</sup>

Miller quoted Grant who disliked Fox intensely but admitted that the power of Fox's speeches came from their moral sentiment.<sup>2</sup> Fox believed in the importance of food for all men and his use of religious or moral arguments were strong persuasive appeals.

Fox's personal persuasion was characterized by the welding together of the audience and himself as "we" and separating themselves from the opposition, the "landlord class" designated as "they." His choice of evidence and argument are consistently influenced by this we-they perspective.<sup>3</sup> The struggle was between the ethos of God, country, and destiny against the enemy--the landed class.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>March 29, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>Miller classes the we-they perspective as delivery; this writer would disagree and describe it as invention under the choice of evidence and argument.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

## Delivery

Fox's forceful delivery was his strongest asset in personal persuasion. He gave the impression of "truth powerfully spoken."<sup>1</sup> Prentice, who heard Fox, reported:

His stature was of the lowest and . . . he had both a full round body, and a full round countenance. . . . The singularity of his appearance was heightened by a thick mass of black hair which floated on his broad shoulders. He commenced his address, and at once the rich deep tones of his voice hushed the whole audience into the deepest attention. So beautifully articulate was every syllable, that his stage whisper might have been at the farthest extremity of the gallery. . . . The effect, when he called on his hearers to bind themselves in a solemn League . . . was electrical.<sup>2</sup>

Holyoake spoke of Fox's low, clear, lute-like voice which penetrated over the pit and gallery of Covent Garden Theatre.<sup>3</sup> Mongredien commented, "his large brown eyes flashed fire, and his impressive gestures imparted dignity to his stature. His voice displayed a combination of power and sweetness. . . ."<sup>4</sup> It is clear that a large part of Fox's personal persuasion was in the delivery of his speeches.

### Charles Pelham Villiers

Charles Pelham Villiers was one of the principal speakers of the Anti-Corn Law League. After receiving a Master's degree from Cambridge, he read law at Lincoln's Inn and in 1827 was called to the bar. In January, 1835,

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, pp. 65-71.

<sup>2</sup>Prentice, II, 59-60.

<sup>3</sup>Holyoake, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup>Mongredien, p. 96.

Villiers was returned as a Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton. From 1835 to 1838 he supported all motions for a fixed duty or for the total repeal of the Corn Laws in the House of Commons. When the Anti-Corn Law League commenced widespread agitation in 1839 Villiers was the only leading advocate of repeal to hold a seat in Parliament, thus enabling him to work for the implementation of the League's goals. Villiers did less speaking than Cobden, Bright, or Moore but his respectability, his position as the leader of repeal in the House until 1841 and as Cobden's chief lieutenant orator in the House after 1842 gave his weekly meetings and agricultural speeches a singular importance. From the League papers it is clear that Villiers was esteemed as the patriarch emeritus of Corn Law repeal. He had no power on the League Council; he did not influence League policy, but his reputation and position were distinct assets to a League accused, among other things, of being entirely an assembly of cant and cotton men. Villiers use of ethical persuasion in his non-parliamentary speeches consisted of the use of position and character, use of personal experience as an appeal, moderate attacks on the opposition, and the establishment of a personal relationship with the audience.

#### Prior Impression

Charles Villiers was a principle speaker of the Anti-Corn Law League not because he gave a large number of

speeches nor because of his leadership on the League Council but because of his respectability and his position as a Member of Parliament. Villiers gained his respectability first through his education at Cambridge then at Lincoln's Inn. In 1827 he was called to the bar; in 1830 he was appointed secretary to the master of the rolls. Two years later he was nominated assistant commissioner for a royal commission inquiring into the poor law; he spent several months traveling in the midlands gathering evidence. In 1833 Villiers was appointed examiner of witnesses in the court of chancery.

In 1835 Villiers was returned for Wolverhampton on a pledge to oppose all restrictions on trade, to advocate triennial Parliaments, the vote by ballot. He joined the opposition, sitting below the gangway with the utilitarians. On March 16, 1837, Villiers seconded motion of William Clay to adopt a fixed duty of 10s. on the importation of foreign wheat. In the general election of 1837 Villiers was again elected for Wolverhampton on the pledge that, if elected, he would move in the House of Commons for total repeal of the Corn Laws. On March 15, 1838, he made good on this promise by moving that "this house resolve itself into a committee of the whole for the purpose of taking into consideration the act 9, George IV, c.60. relating to the importation of corn." This 1838 motion was the first of the annual motions Villiers moved

for total repeal until 1846. Until 1841 Villiers was the leader of the free traders in Parliament; from 1841 to 1846 he shared this leadership with Cobden.

### Treatment of Self

Villiers relied on a sincere, honest character and details of his personal experience as his primary personal appeals. Charles Villiers appeared before his audiences as a sincere, earnest, persevering man who sought truth; he was always careful to remind his audiences of these personal characteristics. In 1843 he told a Manchester audience, "I now come before you with no other claims than that of being ranked as the humble and disinterested advocate of the destructive laws of which you complain."<sup>1</sup> He continued to explain it was from "conscientious conviction" that he acted with the League. At another meeting Villiers assured the audience, "we are earnest, and sincere in the wish to see the Corn Laws repealed--I speak from long experience of the progress of the question in Parliament."<sup>2</sup> Villiers maintained that sincerity and earnestness must be accompanied by perseverance if repeal was to be effected, i.e., "perseverance in a good cause will do anything."<sup>3</sup> If the League added truth and justice

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<sup>1</sup>January 3, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>March 22, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>April 8, 1844.

to perseverance they would succeed. Villiers sincerely believed in the truth and justice of repeal and he reminded his audiences that in his experience, perseverance in a just cause would ultimately bring success.

Besides references to his own character, Villiers used personal experience as evidence. For example, in 1844 Villiers drew lengthy examples from the debate on his annual motion. He explained the sincerity of Gladstone's pledge to stay by a sliding scale and Peel's difficulty in keeping his back bencher's quiet to illustrate the progress repeal opinion was making in the House.<sup>1</sup> There was consistent evidence that Villiers used personal experience as evidence in his weekly meeting speeches.<sup>2</sup>

#### Treatment of the Opposition

Villiers was moderate in his attacks on the opposition and used few personal attacks on specific individuals thus he kept the respect of the middle and upper-class League electors. He complained that the monopolists were not being honest when they attempted to break up League meetings,<sup>3</sup> and reminded "his opponents" that they were profiting from the confusion between those who were rich and those who were respectable.<sup>4</sup> He claimed that the

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<sup>1</sup>July 3, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>January 3, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>January 4, 1843.

<sup>4</sup>February 4, 1844.

farmers had been duped by their professed friends.<sup>1</sup> Like all League speakers Villiers was faced with refuting the many attacks made on the League but he always did so in language indicating his disapproval not his scorn.

Villiers also directed his refutation against a few specific individuals but there was no sense of attack only an explanation. His refutation against Sir Robert Peel was typical:

Well, I have told you literally all that Sir Robert Peel had to say by way of reason and argument; but he had recourse to something else--to something that people generally resort to when they have nothing else, no other mode of defense left--and that is personality. It is a weapon, I believe, constantly made use of against Sir Robert by his own friends. He said that he positively did not believe that any ten sane men could be found, . . . who would really advocate the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. That is the old, stale form of offensiveness which is used by everybody against anybody who does not at any time agree with them in opinion. . . . I want to know what right he has to call persons insane because they are warm and strong advocates of the repeal of the Corn Laws?<sup>2</sup>

#### Relationship with His Audience

Villiers attempted to meet each audience on a friendly, personal basis, by taking several minutes toward the beginning of his speech to establish a cordial relationship with his audience. He congratulated the Manchester Leaguers on the "wonders" they had done for the cause both in financial contributions and for the men

<sup>1</sup>July 3, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Manchester sent to Parliament to advocate its cause. He continued relating how hourly the League was winning public esteem because they occupied a vacant moment in the public mind: Villiers was careful to show each audience that they as individuals were to be commended for their faithful support of the cause for Corn Law repeal.

### Conclusions

In conclusion it was evident that both the lecturers and the League leaders combined some form of personal persuasion with their arguments for repeal. The lecturers were hampered because the audience believed they were paid men and Chartists. Most of the lecturers used a narrative of prior violence to gain a favorable hearing; the refusal of the use of the town hall for a lecture gained additional publicity and larger audiences. The close identification of the League with the Manchester manufacturers was neither a significant hinderance nor a help for the lecturers. John Murray used few personal appeals; he combined sincerity, large amounts of information and a forceful delivery with strong arguments to consistently gain the majority of a show of hands for his total repeal resolution. Sidney Smith was hired because of his respectability, but he lacked the ability to talk freely to an audience; he was subjected to the same physical abuse as the other lecturers. Smith relied on appeals to the authority of God and on his keen incisive wit in his



anti-Corn Law speeches. There was insufficient, consistent evidence to suggest that A. W. Paulton used any type of personal persuasion to his advantage. James Acland relied more on personal persuasion than any of the other lecturers. His forte was refutation where he unhesitatingly met all opponents in a tactful, good-humored manner combining large amounts of information with a vigorous delivery.

Richard Cobden, the chief Anti-Corn Law League speaker, relied mainly on argument. His honesty, his declaration that he sought good, and his depth of knowledge impressed his audiences. Cobden was moderate in his opposition attacks and relied on a close relationship between his audience and himself as his chief personal appeal. John Bright alienated audiences by his recklessness, and bitter denunciations of the landlords. Bright used himself as proof that the League wanted justice; he severely criticized all League enemies in a forceful manner. Robert Ross Rowan Moore suffered during his first year's speaking because he was mistaken for a paid lecturer. Moore almost totally relied on argument making only moderate attacks on League opposition. Colonel Thomas Perronet Thompson was a sincere, honest man who relied on the use of his personal experience as evidence. Thompson alienated the middle and upper-class League audiences by indiscriminately contesting several Parliamentary

vacancies. William Johnson Fox came to the League as an experienced writer and speaker and soon became a popular weekly meeting speaker. Fox used a we-are-good, they-are-bad perspective combined with a forceful, penetrating delivery. Charles Pelham Villiers held a seat in Parliament throughout the Anti-Corn Law League's struggle which gave him a prestigious position as a speaker. Villiers used evidence both of his own character and of his experiences in Parliament as his personal appeals.

The lecturer's use of personal persuasion was as varied as their class standing and speaking ability. Richard Cobden and R. R. R. Moore relied on logical appeals, but used selected personal appeals advantageously. Bright and Fox stressed emotional appeals; Colonel Thompson and Villiers stressed personal appeals. But no one speaker neglected the use of personal persuasion in his anti-Corn Law speaking.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS

On September 24, 1838, seven men met at the York Hotel, Manchester, to form an association devoted to total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. On March 20, 1839, the local associations formed themselves into an Anti-Corn Law League to agitate for total repeal through means of lectures, securing support of the public press, and through a stamped circular. The League organized one of the most successful political agitations of its time; it focused radical energy on an attempt to break the power of the conservative landed aristocracy. From 1839 to 1846 the League published a newspaper and thousands of tracts; the League speakers, both lecturers and Council leaders, spoke to thousands of working men and middle class voters.

#### Oral Campaigns of the Anti-Corn Law League

The agitation against the Corn Laws was focused into four distinct periods. From October, 1838, to December, 1839, the League relied on lecturers as the primary device for disseminating repeal arguments. From January, 1840, to August, 1840, the League again stressed the lecture agitation although much attention was also given

to the publication of tracts and to the Anti-Corn Law Circular. There was no carefully organized propaganda campaign from September, 1840, to August, 1842. Finally from September, 1842, to July, 1846, the League concentrated on the reform of the register and the purchase of qualifications. Until 1840 the primary focus of the League propaganda was on the oral agitation; after 1840, more money and more energy was spent on the non-oral agitation.

During the entire campaign, the League used seven forms of oral agitation. Lectures were the first method. The Council sought men who combined the talents of an effective speaker, a knowledge of the Corn Laws with an honest, reliable character. A. W. Paulton, a medical student, was the first lecturer. Paulton's major tours were: London, February to April, 1839; Scotland, June to October, 1839; London, February to April, 1840; Hereford, October to December, 1842. In 1843 he became editor of the League.

Sidney Smith, a solicitor from Edinburgh, was the second lecturer hired. Smith caused the Town and Gown riot in Cambridge in May, 1839; he tried to organize London from January to May, 1840. Smith edited the Circulars and in 1842 was permanently assigned to the organization of London.

James Acland, a former agitator and the first

working class lecturer hired, was particularly adept at overcoming stiff opposition from the Tory or landed interests. Acland's major speaking tours were: south-west England, April to July, 1839; Birmingham, 1840; Norfolk and Suffolk, April to July, 1840; Buckinghamshire, March to May, 1841; district of the Duke of Cleveland, 1842.

John Joseph Finnigan, a Manchester working man, was hired as a League lecturer in March, 1840. He failed to agitate Buckinghamshire and made few gains in Dublin in 1840. In 1842 he was assigned to York.

John Murray, a Liverpool moral force Chartist, was hired in March, 1840, and assigned to Ireland. From 1841 to 1846 Murray was sent into a district ahead of a League deputation to lecture, to get up placards, and to whip up enthusiasm.

Other lecturers hired for limited periods of time were: George Greig, secretary of the Leeds Anti-Corn Law Association; Walter Griffith and John Jenkins who were assigned to Wales; George Thompson, secretary to the British India Society and former anti-slavery orator; J. S. Buckingham, world traveler and speaker; Colonel Thomas Perronet Thompson, author of Catechism on the Corn Laws; Timothy Falvey, a silk weaver from Macclesfield; Daniel Liddell, a political organizer; and Archibald Prentice, editor of the Manchester Times.

The lecture audiences were large; five hundred to a

thousand was not unusual. At first all classes and all occupations listened to the lectures but by 1840, the lecture focus shifted to the electors. Particularly during the early years of the agitation, a large part of the audiences were Chartists. Two or three lectures in a series were common; the first lecture was informative, the second persuasive. The second lecture was often combined with discussion when the lecturer answered all questions. If a third meeting was held, the lecturer drew out one of the Corn Law advocates for a Discussion. Lectures of two or three hours were common; some discussions took up to nine hours. Tracts were distributed to the audience either after the lecture or in the days before to build up opinion and anticipation. In the boroughs where a sizable number of electors were repealers before the lecturer arrived, an association was formed after the second lecture. At times, the lecturers gathered signatures to repeal petitions after the lecture. The Anti-Corn Law League lecturer was a hired political agent with sufficient knowledge of his subject to lecture and discuss with all opponents.

A second form of oral agitation used infrequently by the League was formal debates and discussions. The League speakers defeated a mixture of Chartist and Central Agricultural Society orators.

Weekly meetings were the third form of oral

agitation used from March, 1842, until the repeal of the Corn Laws. These meetings were held to hear reports of lectures, correspondence, and the leading men of the movement. In sixty-nine weekly meetings held during the agitation, seventy-nine different speakers were heard; of these separate speakers, twenty-two were Members of Parliament and sixteen were Christian ministers. The 1844 series of meetings in Covent Garden Theatre, London were the most important in showing the strength of the League.

League deputation visits to county or borough meetings were the fourth mode of oral agitation. Richard Cobden, John Bright, R. R. R. Moore, and Colonel T. P. Thompson made eighty percent of the deputation visits either to raise money, to organize and promote registration and qualification activities, or to convince the farmers of the necessity of repeal.

Conferences of the various Anti-Corn Law Associations were the sixth form of agitation used. Before the opening of Parliament in February each year, the associations assembled to decide on the course of action the delegates would pursue in regard to Villiers' annual motion for repeal. The League conferences were held primarily in the early years of the agitation to hear progress reports and to show the strength of the League.

One final category of oral agitation activities included ten miscellaneous special meetings. Two were

held in February, 1843, to support Cobden after Peel's attack in the House. A special meeting of August 8, 1844, paid tribute to Villiers.

The Anti-Corn Law League organized an intensive propaganda campaign. From 1838 to 1840 the oral segment of the agitation was most important; after 1840 such non-oral activities as the registration and qualification campaign received major emphasis. Lectures were the most frequently used method of oral agitation with deputation visits to county and borough meetings second in frequency. Weekly meetings were the most ostentatious oral method used. Discussions, conferences, election speaking, and special meetings were infrequently used.

#### Cobden-Bright Supremacy

There have been many misconceptions about the position of Bright and Cobden as the leaders and chief speakers of the Anti-Corn Law League. This legend grew from several sources. Trevelyan, in his biography of Bright, picked Cobden, Bright, and Fox as the League's chief advocates; Cobden was argument, Bright was passion, and Fox was rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> Morley maintained that Cobden always spoke before Bright and that "the alliance between them far more than doubled the power either could have

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<sup>1</sup>Trevelyan, p. 98.



exerted without the other."<sup>1</sup> Ausubel suggested that none of the League speakers could capture and hold an audience as Bright could.<sup>2</sup> In the Rede Lecture on modern Parliamentary eloquence delivered at Cambridge, November 6, 1913, Earl Curzon told his audience he must mention Richard Cobden because "it is impossible to omit the man whose powers of luminous exposition acted as a foil to the fervid oratory of John Bright on a hundred platforms."<sup>3</sup> Accounts of the Anti-Corn Law League for a hundred years after its dissolution persisted in the claim that John Bright and Richard Cobden were the League leaders and chief advocates.

In 1958 when Norman McCord published his study of the Anti-Corn Law League as a political pressure group based on research in the original League papers, historians were forced to re-evaluate their conclusions on the League leadership. McCord maintained:

The traditional view of Cobden and Bright as the leaders of the League is erroneous; Bright was an important member of the League Council, and Cobden's principal lieutenant as an orator in and out of Parliament, but he never acquired a position in the League as important as those of Cobden and Bright.<sup>4</sup>

From the retirement of J. B. Smith, Wilson first reorganized the League office then guided the entire propaganda

<sup>1</sup>Morley, p. 190

<sup>2</sup>Ausubel, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Earl Curzon, Modern Parliamentary Eloquence (London: MacMillan & Co., 1914), p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>McCord, p. 171.

campaign. At the final meeting of the Council, Cobden paid tribute to the unseen labors of Wilson in the practical business details of the agitation. Perhaps more significant was the comment made by Cobden in a private letter to Wilson in July, 1846: "You and I made the League, and the League made others. . . ."<sup>1</sup> It was clear from the League papers that Cobden and Wilson were the League leaders. Bright was a leader of the extremist faction of the League Council and he was well aware of his secondary position. He told Cobden:

I am of opinion that your retirement would be tantamount to a dissolution of the League, its mainspring would be gone. I can in no degree take your place, as a second I can fight, but there are incapacities about me of which I am fully conscious which prevent my being more than a second in such a work as we have laboured in. . . .<sup>2</sup>

From her research in the League papers, this writer would also conclude that Cobden and Wilson, not Cobden and Bright were the League leaders.

Two other conclusions regarding Cobden and Bright as the League's chief speakers need revision. Cobden and Bright have been classed as the League's chief advocates. This conclusion is not totally accurate. In frequency of speeches at both the weekly and deputation meetings, Bright and R. R. R. Moore were equal; Bright gave more weekly meeting speeches than Moore, but Moore gave more

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<sup>1</sup>McCord, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

deputation speeches than Bright. Using the criteria of popularity, during weekly meeting speeches Bright, Fox, and Villiers were secondary in position to Cobden. In deputation speaking Moore and Colonel Thompson shared Bright's secondary position. In both frequency and popularity as judged by the League papers, Bright had only a slight edge over Moore, Fox, and Colonel Thompson.

The reports of contemporary periodical and newspaper press do not support the conclusion that Bright and Cobden were the chief League advocates. Cobden was consistently listed alone as the leading advocate; Bright and several others were added as secondary speakers. In 1843 John Almack, in publishing ninety-five pages of refutation of the character, motives, and proceedings of the League, listed Cobden as the sole head and chief advocate.<sup>1</sup> The Westminster Review in 1844, concluded that the League was represented by the eloquence of Richard Cobden, Milner Gibson, John Bright, and W. J. Fox.<sup>2</sup> In a history of the anti-Corn Law agitation in 1844, the Eclectic Review concluded that during the early years of the agitation, "Messrs. R. H. Greg, J. B. Smith, R. Cobden, W. Rawson,

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<sup>1</sup>John Almack, Character, Motives, and Proceedings of the Anti-Corn Law League (London: John Ollivier, 1843), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Earl Spencer and the State of the Parties," Westminster Review, XLI (March-June, 1844), 268-277.

and Mr. Dyer were the most distinguished speakers. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

In 1843 Somerville wrote to Wilson that the Weekly Illustrated Times wanted to put the likeness of the League's leading spokesmen plus a short historical sketch in their paper. They chose Cobden, Bright, Wilson, Moore, Paulton, and Villiers for the first series.<sup>2</sup> In 1845 the London correspondent of the Scotsman chose Cobden, Villiers, Milner Gibson, and Bright for analysis as the "four chief performers" of the League.<sup>3</sup> As a part of the League victory celebration in 1846, first-class or French paper proofs of the League leaders were sold. In the first group were the portraits of Cobden, Bright, Villiers, Earl Radnor, Wilson, Bowring, Thompson, Ashworth, Milner Gibson, Rawson, Brotherton, Brooks, and Sir Thomas Potter.<sup>4</sup> Consistently the contemporary periodical and newspaper reports of the League leaders chose several speakers in addition to Cobden and Bright as the League's chief advocates. Thus the list of the leading League speakers must be extended to include Cobden, Bright, Moore, Fox, Colonel Thompson, and Villiers.

Secondly, Morley and others maintained that Cobden

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<sup>1</sup>"The Anti-Corn Law League--It's History and Prospects," Eclectic Review, XV (1844), 194-223.

<sup>2</sup>Letter Reuben (Somerville) to Wilson, March 17, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>Manchester Times, April 19, 1845.

<sup>4</sup>League, May 9, 1846.

spoke first outlining the arguments then Bright followed adding emotional appeals to persuade the audience. This conclusion probably came from an examination of the 1845 weekly, qualification, and registration meetings where Cobden did speak first and Bright second often, with Fox third in the weekly meetings. However, an analysis of the seven years of the agitation before 1845 does not always reveal this clear one, two speaking order. In weekly meetings the order was Cobden then Bright but often there was one or more speakers between them. In agricultural meetings Bright was more often the first speaker and Cobden followed with the facts, statistics, and arguments designed to convince the farmer; Bright's function was often to stimulate the audience to the point they would forget previous sets and be prepared to listen to Cobden's logic. Generally in their anti-Corn Law speaking Bright did follow Cobden but in agricultural or money raising meetings, Bright was the stimulator occupying either the first or last speaking position.

From the League papers available it is clear that Cobden and Wilson were the League leaders; Cobden, Bright, Moore, Fox, Colonel Thompson, and Villiers were the leading speakers; and that the Bright then Cobden speaking order was not consistent throughout the agitation.

Personal Persuasion Used by the Anti-Corn Law  
League Speakers

The League Lecturers

From October, 1838, to August, 1842, the Anti-Corn Law League concentrated most of its money and effort on the lecture agitation by A. W. Paulton, Sidney Smith, James Acland, John Murray, and others. All four lecturers faced stiff opposition because of the prior opinion the audience held of them. There was no correlation between the class of the lecturer and his success in gaining a hearing; the working class lecturers, Acland and Murray, because of their speaking ability were able to consistently gain the majority in a post-lecture repeal vote. Each lecturer faced opposition because he was a "paid man"; this was grounds for complete rejection of the lecturer and his message by some audiences. All lecturers were subjected to physical abuse then they later used a narrative of this abuse as an introduction to gain the sympathy of a new audience. If the town hall was refused for an anti-Corn Law lecture, the lecturer gained considerable support from the free speech champions regardless of their views on the Corn Laws. Often the lecturers were mistaken for Chartists and thus lost middle and moneyed class support. During the early years of the anti-Corn Law agitation, the lecturers faced stiff opposition because of the prior opinion of them held by their

audiences.

John Murray used few personal appeals; he was a quiet, sincere hard working lecturer who relied on well developed arguments backed with many examples and statistics to persuade his audiences. He had a thorough knowledge of his subject which he coupled with a forceful, earnest delivery to persuade his listeners.

Sidney Smith was hired because the League hoped the respectability of his former position would gain an attentive hearing for him. It did not. Smith appealed to the authority of God in support of repeal; he relied extensively on his keen, incisive wit with strong emphasis on sarcasm and ridicule. Smith was most successful when he could read his manuscript speech to a middle class audience; he was unable, in the early years of the agitation, to speak freely to an audience.

There was insufficient, consistent evidence to suggest that A. W. Paulton used any type of ethical persuasion to his advantage or disadvantage.

James Acland relied more on personal persuasion than any of the other lecturers. He impressed his audiences with a thorough knowledge of his subject but Acland's fort  in persuasion was refutation; his ready, sincere, good-humored replies won many friends for repeal. He was short, thin, wore his hair very long, and spoke in an earnest, forceful manner.

### The League Leaders

Richard Cobden was the League's chief speaker. Cobden had no national reputation as a speaker until he was elected as a Member of Parliament for Stockport in 1841. That membership plus the attacks by The Times built a large audience for his League speeches. Cobden relied extensively on logical appeals in his anti-Corn Law speaking but he did not neglect personal persuasion. He used an "I come to seek good" introduction at agricultural meetings. Cobden also related to the farmers how he, a farmer's son, had to leave the farm and seek work in business. His depth of knowledge combined with sincerity and honesty impressed his listeners. In attacks on opponents Cobden chose moderate general terms for his denunciations and he seldom attacked individuals. Cobden was a natural speaker who relied on the intrinsic value of his arguments. His delivery was an impression of his entire personality; he had the enthusiasm, patience, and the good humor of an experienced speaker.

John Bright relied on emotional and personal appeals during his anti-Corn Law speaking. Bright was a sincere, hard working, principled speaker with a strong sense of individual identity but excesses of recklessness, tactlessness, bitterness, and impatience alienated his middle and upper-class audiences. Bright's agricultural assignment was fulfilled primarily with the use of



personal appeal to justice in the sequence: the League has been attacked, we ask only justice, I give personal proof of our intentions. He consistently told weekly meeting audiences that he and the League were honest. Bright used sarcasm and ridicule in severe attacks on League enemies but his forceful, pleasing delivery produced a favorable impression.

Robert Ross Rowan Moore had difficulty in 1842 and 1843 gaining a hearing because few knew of his background and class standing and many thought him a paid lecturer. Moore's major refutation assignments were completed by attacks on evidence and logical adequacy; Moore did not believe in "arguing personalities." He used moderate terms and never turned on an individual opponent. He had an excellent, resonant voice which added to his personal persuasion.

Colonel Thomas Perronet Thompson was a sincere, honest man who relied on the use of personal experiences as evidence in his speeches; he used his life as a soldier, as a Member of Parliament, and as a radical. In his excessive zeal to gain a seat in Parliament, Thompson alienated many middle class League electors but Cobden consistently took the Colonel along on money raising and qualification deputation visits. Colonel Thompson was a plain-spoken, candid advocate of repeal.

William Johnson Fox combined moral fervor and

sincerity to impress his anti-Corn Law audiences. He welded the audience and himself into "we" and separated themselves from the opposition, the "landlords," designated as "they." The struggle was between the ethos of God and country and the enemy, the landed class. Fox also used his powerful, clear voice to ridicule the landlord.

Charles Pelham Villiers was the only leading advocate of Corn Law repeal to hold a seat in Parliament throughout the entire League campaign. Villiers appeared before his audiences as a sincere, earnest, persevering man who sought truth; he was always careful to remind his audiences of these personal characteristics. He also used examples of his experience in the House as evidence; his attacks on the opposition were moderate. Villiers often took several minutes toward the beginning of his speech to establish a cordial relationship with his audience.

#### Effect of the Oral Agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League on the Repeal of the Corn Laws

Before the effect of the oral agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League on the repeal of the Corn Laws can be measured, the total contribution of the League to repeal must be evaluated. In 1846 Cobden, Bright, and the League were given popular credit for effecting repeal. The Manchester Guardian asked, "what is to be done for him [Cobden] to whom we are indebted for the accomplishment of this

stupendous change?"<sup>1</sup> Peel furthered the myth with a generous tribute to Cobden in the House:

but the name which ought to be associated with the success of those measures is the name of a man who, acting, I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has, with untiring energy, by appeals to reason, enforced their necessity with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned; the name which ought to be associated with the success of those measures is the name of Richard Cobden.<sup>2</sup>

Ausubel, Morley, and other historians concur that in the popular mind, the League and its leaders were responsible for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

Nevertheless, the League did not and could not control the machinery of repeal. McCord is emphatic that nothing showed more clearly the fundamental impotence of the League than its inability after eight years of agitation to have any control over the "procedure or the exact terms utilized."<sup>3</sup> The decisive steps were taken in Parliament, and the Leaguers held no positions of power with either party.<sup>4</sup> Thus the League was not powerful enough either at the polls or in the Commons to have carried repeal against the opposition of the landed interest.<sup>5</sup> Without the Irish potato famine the landed interest would

<sup>1</sup>July 1, 1846.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>McCord, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup>George Kitson-Clark, The Making of Victorian England (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>John W. Derry, A Short History of Nineteenth Century England (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 161.

not have split and thus the Corn Laws would not have been repealed. The Anti-Corn Law League did not and could not control the machinery of repeal.

If the League did not control the machinery of repeal, what was the contribution of their eight years agitation? The League's national character, tight organization, and perseverance frightened the ruling class. Morley saw the League's perseverance as its crucial asset.<sup>1</sup> The Manchester Guardian chose "an indomitable will--a determined purpose, created and supported by justice," as the League's most significant asset.<sup>2</sup> Halévy talked of "the concentration on a single object;"<sup>3</sup> and Brinton of the League's "persistence,"<sup>4</sup> Jordan cited the importance of the League's national character,<sup>5</sup> and Cobden explained "that the House is moved only when the electors are in motion."<sup>6</sup> The ruling class were frightened primarily by two League activities. The small electoral base of the Commons was being eroded by the

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<sup>1</sup>Morley, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup>July 4, 1846.

<sup>3</sup>Elie Halévy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. IV: Victorian Years: 1841-1895 (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1961), 149.

<sup>4</sup>Crane Brinton, English Political Thought in the 19th Century (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 104.

<sup>5</sup>Henry Donald Jordan, "The Political Methods of the Anti-Corn Law League," Political Science Quarterly, XLII (1927), 75.

<sup>6</sup>Anti-Bread Tax Circular, May 30, 1843.

League qualification campaign.<sup>1</sup> Also on December 23, the significance of the announcement of the £250,000 fund and the subscription of £60,000 in one hour and a half with twenty three firms giving £1,000 each was not lost on the government. The reputation of the League as a persevering, national agitation combined with the unknown gains of the qualification campaign and the implications of a mammoth agitation from the £250,000 fund frightened the ruling class.

The effect of the League on repeal because of this fright was in three areas. First, the possibility that the noise, or clamor of the League could keep the ports open to free trade in grain prevented Peel from initially opening the ports as the famine became widespread in 1845. The stepped up agitation of the League from November, 1845, to January, 1846, was Cobden's move to force the landowners to show their hand. Either they gambled in the face of spreading famine and kept the ports closed or they opened the ports and risked that the League was powerful enough to keep them open.<sup>2</sup> Second, the League forced the Whigs out of their fixed duty stand. Some historians maintained that Lord John Russell was converted to repeal

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<sup>1</sup>Morley, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup>Both McCord, p. 208 and Morley, pp. 340-341, 406 support this conclusion.

by Lord Grey<sup>1</sup> but it is more likely, as McCord suggested, that the League harried the Whigs out of their fixed duty scheme.<sup>2</sup> In his Edinburgh letter Russell announced he could no longer support a fixed duty. In this way the League gained the support of a political party and even though Russell could not form a government, his compromise made repeal inevitable.<sup>3</sup> The conversion of the Whigs was an important League triumph. Thirdly, the League was able to force Peel's hand sooner than he had anticipated. Peel chose to pursue a national interest in repealing the Corn Laws at the risk of a split in his own party. The League did not convince Peel of the necessity of repeal but with the landowners decision to gamble on keeping the ports closed, only the repeal of the Corn Laws would save thousands from starvation. Peel chose the national interest thus speeding up repeal. By frightening the ruling class, the League was able to prevent Peel from opening the ports, force the Whigs out of their fixed duty scheme, and bring about the repeal of the Corn Laws before Peel anticipated it would be necessary.

The position of the League in 1845 as a national pressure group of sufficient dimensions to frighten the

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<sup>1</sup>Norman Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics: 1832-1852 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 190.

<sup>2</sup>McCord, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>Morley, p. 406.

ruling class was built primarily by their large public meetings and the carefully organized campaign to purchase qualifications. The League's tightly-organized propaganda campaign made it difficult to dismiss the influence of the newspaper or pamphlet agitation, however, only by changing the complexion of Parliament could the League hope to repeal the Corn Laws (before the 1845 famine and Lord John Russell's letter) and to gain this end, large meetings stirred up interest and impressed the protectionists with the force and numbers against them while the qualification campaign secured the means for this interest to effect repeal.

Both the weekly meetings and the various deputation meetings were significant factors in building the national image of the League. Spearman concluded that the public meeting was the League's chief propaganda method and that:

the real importance of the Anti-Corn Law agitation in the history of democracy is that it showed the importance of the new method of communication--the speech delivered at a public meeting and fully reported in the newspapers . . . it was to the increase in newspapers and the habit of reading them which gave the platform its dominant position as a propaganda method; . . .<sup>1</sup>

This writer would concur only that the public meeting was one of the two most important propaganda methods. The meeting was a direct appeal to voters and speakers gave rudimentary political education while entertaining the

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<sup>1</sup>Diana Spearman, Democracy in England (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 121.

audience. James Wilson maintained that the meeting audiences were more committed and identified more closely with the agitation than did the audiences for any of the other League activities.<sup>1</sup> The large League public meeting was an important propaganda asset because it stirred interest in those who attended. Ultimately with more interest, thus more members, and finally more purchases of qualifications, the League hoped to win repeal. The League of 1845 frightened the ruling class because of its large national base of support and this support was built largely through public meetings. Thus the oral agitation of the Anti-Corn Law League was an effective constituent of the total propaganda campaign.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter James Wilson to J. B. Smith, May 18, 1841.



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## VITA

Reta Alice Gilbert was born December 10, 1936 at Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. She attended grammar school in Calgary and Lacombe, Alberta and high school in Penticton, British Columbia, Canada. She received a B.S. degree from Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, in June, 1959, with a major in public address and minors in History and Spanish. She graduated with an M.S. in 1960 from Brigham Young University with a major in public address and a minor in oral interpretation. She attended Louisiana State University from 1960 to 1962, majoring in speech with a minor in European history and government. She is presently employed as an assistant professor of speech at California State College at Long Beach.


# EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT


Candidate: Reta Alice Gilbert

Major Field: Speech

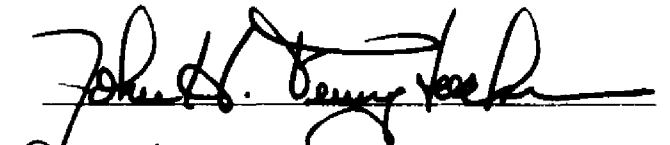

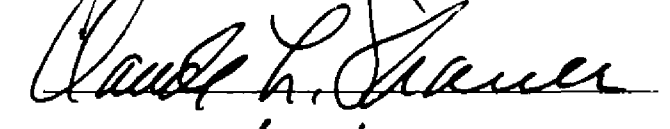
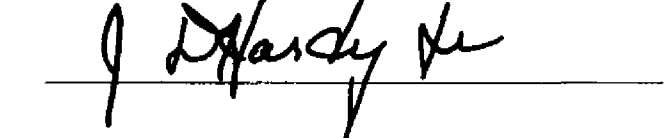
Title of Thesis: A Description and Evaluation of the Public Speaking of the  
Anti-Corn Law League: 1838-1846

Approved:

  
Major Professor and Chairman

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

May 11, 1967